

**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**  
**SAKARYA UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES EDUCATION**  
**ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

**INVESTIGATING THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION  
ERASMUS PLUS (ERASMUS+) YOUTH EXCHANGE PROJECTS TO FOREIGN  
LANGUAGE LEARNING**

**M.A. THESIS**

**KORAY CANTEZ**

**SUPERVISOR**

**ASST. PROF. DR. CİHAT ATAR**

**AUGUST 2020**



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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the present thesis has been prepared by me, and the study is carried out in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that I have cited and referenced all information used in the thesis.

Koray CANTEZ



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## ÖZET

# AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ ERASMUS PLUS (ERASMUS+) GENÇLİK DEĞİŞİMİ PROJELERİNİN YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENİMİNE OLAN KATKILARININ DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

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Sakarya Üniversitesi, 2020

Bu araştırmanın amacı Avrupa Birliği (AB) Erasmus+ Gençlik Değişimi Projeleri katılımcılarının İngilizce konuşma becerisi ve yabancı dil öğrenme motivasyonu açısından incelenmesi ve değerlendirilmesidir.

Bu araştırma, amaçlı örnekleme metodu kullanılarak, Edirne Doğa Sporları Derneği ile Sakarya Bisiklet ve Doğa Sporları Derneği üyeleri ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Her iki dernek de 2014-2020 yılları arasında aktif olarak Avrupa Birliği Erasmus+ Projelerine dahil olmuştur.

Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma modeli kullanılmıştır ve standartlaştırılmış açık uçlu görüşme modeliyle katılımcılarla mülakat yapılmıştır. Hazırlanan araştırma soruları AB Gençlik Değişimi Projelerinin katılımcıların dil öğrenme motivasyonu ve İngilizce konuşma becerileri açısından bir rolü olup olmadığını ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemektedir. Nitel araştırma metoduyla yapılan bu araştırmanın iki temel araştırma sorusu şu şekildedir;

1. AB Erasmus+ Gençlik Değişimi Projelerinin İngilizce konuşma becerisine katkısı hakkında katılımcıların görüşleri nelerdir?
2. AB Erasmus+ Gençlik Değişimi Projelerinin yabancı dil öğrenme motivasyonuna katkısı hakkında katılımcıların görüşleri nelerdir?

Araştırma yaşları 27 -31 arasında olan 10 katılımcı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Nitel araştırma metoduyla yürütülen çalışmada katılımcılara standartlaştırılmış açık uçlu görüşme teknikleriyle hazırlanan ve uzman görüşüne sunulan sorular yönetilmiştir. Yöneltilen sorular transkript edilmiş ve betimleyici kodlama ve betimsel analiz metodu kullanılarak MAXQDA 2018 programında nitel analizi yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın geçerlilik ve güvenilirliğini sağlamak amacıyla kodlama ve bulgular nitel araştırma konusunda uzman araştırmacıların görüşüne sunulmuştur ve onaylanmıştır.

Araştırma sonucu olarak AB Gençlik Değişimi Projelerinin katılımcıların yabancı dil öğrenme motivasyonu ve İngilizce konuşma becerileri açısından oldukça yararlı olduğu ve

katılımcıların yabancı dil öğrenme motivasyonunu ve İngilizce konuşma becerilerini geliştirdiđi ortaya çıkmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Avrupa Birliđi, Erasmus+, Konuşma Becerisi, Gençlik Deđişimi, Motivasyon, Dil Öğrenimi.



## **ABSTRACT**

### **EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ERASMUS PLUS (ERASMUS+) YOUTH EXCHANGE PROJECTS REGARDING THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Koray CANTEZ, Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Cihat ATAR

Sakarya University, 2020

The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of the European Union (EU) Erasmus+ Youth Exchange (YE) projects' participants regarding their foreign language motivation and speaking fluency development.

By utilizing purposive sampling method, the study was carried out with the participation of members of non-governmental organisations, namely, Edirne Nature Sports Club Association and Sakarya Cycling and Nature Sports Club Association. Both Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been actively involved in European Union Erasmus+ projects implemented between 2014 and 2020.

In this study, qualitative research design and 'standardized open-ended interview' model were utilized. The research questions aim to find out whether the EU Youth Exchange Program plays an important role on participants' foreign language learning motivation and English speaking fluency. Qualitative research questions prepared by the researcher aim to explore two main research questions;

1. What are the participants' views regarding the contribution of EU Erasmus+ Youth Exchange Projects to their English speaking skills?
2. What are the participants' views regarding the contribution of EU Erasmus+ Youth Exchange Projects to their English learning motivation?

The participants of the study were 10 Turkish teenagers and young adults whose ages ranged from 27 to 31. Content Analysis Method was used to analyze the interviews. In this qualitative study, interviewees were addressed ten open-ended interview questions that had been approved by expert opinion. The interviews were transcribed and qualitatively analyzed by utilizing descriptive coding and Content Analysis method via MAXQDA 2018 Qualitative Data Analysis Software. For the validity and credibility of the research, codings and findings were reviewed and approved by an expert in the qualitative research field.

The findings of the research reveal that according to the views of the participants EU Erasmus+ Youth Exchange Projects provide several benefits to participants in terms of improving foreign language level, and Youth Exchange projects have contributed to participants' English speaking fluency and foreign language learning motivation.

**Key Words:** European Union, Erasmus+, Speaking Skills, Youth Exchange, Motivation, Language Learning.



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AB: Avrupa Birliđi

ELT: English Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EU: European Union

NA: National Agency

NFE: Non-Formal Education

NGO: Non- Governmental Organization

UA: Ulusal Ajans

YE: Youth Exchange

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Due to globalization, English has been a widespread phenomenon and it is spoken by at least a quarter of the world's population (Harmer, 2001, p. 17). According to Demirel (1999) and Erdem & Atar (2018), foreign language teaching in Turkey has not been as successful as expected. As Prakash (2017) states, it is commonly observed that though English is taught from the first year of schooling up to university level, most ESL learners fail to communicate in English in a real-life situation. After taking English lessons for more than ten years, many university graduates accept that they are not capable of speaking English. Even though a great number of methodologies have been introduced to the Turkish Educational Curriculum since English as a Foreign Language (EFL) was first introduced in Turkey, significant success has never been attained. One of the underlying reasons of the failure in foreign language learning is lack of practice and interaction in target language. Learning a foreign language is an interactive, social process (Sabitha, 2013) and learners in non-multinational countries can not have the opportunity to practice and have social interaction.

On the other hand, European Union (EU) Erasmus+ Projects provide great opportunities to individuals and institutions to take part in projects, make new friends and socialize with foreign people, improve their foreign language proficiency, travel around Europe, enjoy different cultures, gain new opportunities and broaden their horizon. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are legal organizations established by people to realize a specific purpose, without the aim of earning money (TDK, 2019). Different NGOs can be seen engaged in different activities. NGOs are the organisations that any individual over fifteen years of age can willingly join and be a member of. They are also institutions that help life-long learning process, which means that the theoretical information not taught within the formal education frame can be socially acquired and experienced thanks to NGOs. Some of the main objectives of the NGOs are to create space for their members to meet their social needs and accomplish their self-actualisations. The activities of the NGOs in Turkey are inspected by Ministry of Interior Department of Association, and ever since Turkey was allowed to join European Union Projects, thousands of NGOs have actively taken part in projects and contributed to their members' chances of finding an opportunity to realize their goals.

### **1.1. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the current study is to provide insights into Erasmus+ programme in terms of its perceived effect on participants' English speaking skills and its perceived effect on participants' English Language learning motivation by interviewing the people who took part in Erasmus+ Youth Exchange (YE) projects. With the purpose of determining the motivation of the participants at Sakarya Cycling and Nature Sports Association and Edirne Nature Sports Association, open-ended structured interview model questions were asked to elaborate. To be more specific, the research aims to find out motivational factors of EU YE projects in terms of participants' speaking skills as well as finding out whether Youth Exchange projects could be regarded as an option to improve language level or foreign language fluency.

### **1.2. Significance of the study**

With the development of technology, accessing the information on the other side of the World, finding a cheap flight or discovering new countries and new cultures have never been easier. In today's World, country policies are not introvert; import and export have become everyday trading terms, and many international factories have their plants founded overseas and create labour opportunities for developing countries. Considering these developments, people try to learn foreign languages and improve their foreign language skills so as to have better job opportunities and better living standards. In many cases, people who have graduated from universities try private language teaching institutions and take individual courses. However, due to lack of time or certain personal limits, some people fail to finish the classes or can not improve their language skills. On the other hand, EU Erasmus+ projects provide great opportunities to a wide range of people from different background and different nationalities. These projects can be regarded as excellent ways to trigger the motivation of a language learner and improve foreign language level. Besides, the projects do not take as much time as language courses, and participants do not need to spend money. According to Turkish National Agency in 2014-2017 framework, more than 52.000 Turkish citizens gained the opportunity to be funded by Erasmus+ program, and the total budget was approximately 100.000.000 Euro (€). Even though thousands of people are involved, and extensive research has been carried out regarding EU Erasmus+ projects, this research is unique in terms of investigating the effects of projects on participants' foreign language skills and motivational development.

Erasmus+ has drawn the attention of many researchers that are focused on its foreign language impact. The studies carried out within Erasmus+ frame mainly focus on Erasmus+ Student Exchanges carried out by higher education institutions. Gürlek (2016) and Mulcar (2019) studied the effects of Erasmus Student Exchange Program on attitudes towards learning English. The results of the research found out that Exchange Programme helped participants either develop or improve positive attitudes towards learning English. Fombona et al. (2013) investigated the motivational factors of Erasmus Students and found that the exchange programme had a positive impact on foreign language. Kayaoğlu (2016) studied the Erasmus Exchange Program to analyze students' perception and experiences and stated a vast majority of the students confirmed that they improved their foreign language skills. Özdemir (2019) studied the effects of studying in ELF context on Turkish Erasmus Exchange students and their foreign language proficiency development. His research aimed to analyze the reading, listening, vocabulary and grammar proficiency of the students and results showed that Exchange program contributed significantly to students' foreign language skills.

The present study differs from the studies mentioned above for several significant reasons. First of all, the student exchanges carried out by higher education institutions take place in universities and students are expected to attend formal class education in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Students are not expected to fail. However, YE projects take advantage of non-formal education methods. Participants gather under a roof to carry out specific tasks willingly, without fear of failure and academic worries. Secondly, what makes the present study differ from previous studies on Erasmus student exchange is the difference in the duration of programs. Student exchanges last 3 to 12 months depending on the academic calendar of the hosting institutions.

On the other hand, the length of YE projects lasts 5 to 21 days (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020). The difference in duration between the two programs is a key factor to consider in the evaluation of the results.

Last but not the least, the distinctive reason of the present study is the socialization process of the participants. Shvidko (2016) states that foreign language learning is a complex but dynamic process which includes socialization in addition to learners' cognitive development. Student Exchange program mainly focuses on the academic development of the students and students have to cope with the socialization process on their own. On the other hand, YE project and its activities focus on socialization. Shvidko (2016) states that during the

socialization process, the development of linguistic and cultural competences facilitate each other.

Although various significant studies which are mentioned in the previous paragraphs have been carried out within other Key Actions of Erasmus+, no study has been carried out, to the best knowledge of the researcher, to evaluate the effects of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 Mobility of Individuals Youth Exchange projects' contribution to foreign language learning motivation and English speaking skills development. Even though the researcher conducted only qualitative data analysis method and the population of the participants is limited, both practitioners and other researchers can take advantage of the research.

### **1.3. The Assumptions**

Standardized open-ended interview model as a part of the Qualitative research design was carried out during data collection. Hence, it is assumed that the participants who were involved in the study were willing to give detailed information and tell only the truth. The interview was carried out in two different ways. Seven participants were interviewed face to face, and three participants were interviewed via Skype. It is assumed that all the participants had an abundance of time to give detailed information and showed no signs of shyness or hesitation to hide information from the researcher.

### **1.4. Limitations of the study**

Quantitative research scale was not conducted to compare and contrast the qualitative findings of the research. Therefore, the research is qualitative, and it is not intended to generate generalizable results. As the researcher intends to gain insight into Erasmus+ YE Projects in terms of its effect on participants' speaking skills and language motivation, structured open-ended interview model was employed.

The study did not take into account some external factors such as age, gender and financial income. A further study comparing such factors might bring a deeper perspective and explanations as such factors can be important determinants of both foreign language learning motivation and proficiency.

Another limitation of the study is the number of samples. The research was conducted with 10 participants who were members of two different Non-Governmental Organizations. They were asked ten questions within the frame of a structured open-ended interview model and by utilizing in-depth analysis, the researcher collected deeper data for the validity and

reliability of the research. Even though the findings are not generalizable, other researchers and practitioners alike may benefit from the study.

### **1.5. Definitions**

**Action:** Action refers to a strand or measure of the Erasmus+ Programme. Examples of Actions are; Strategic Partnerships in the field of education, training and youth, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, Sectors Skills Alliances, etc." (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020, p318).

**Erasmus+ (Erasmus Plus):** The EU Programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. Erasmus+ is designed to help tackle social and economic gaps and differences. Implementation duration of Erasmus is 2014-2020. Erasmus+ focuses on key challenges that Europe is expected to face until the end of the decade. (European Commission, 2019).

**Youth Exchange:** Youth Exchange is a program inside Erasmus+ mobility projects Key Action 1- Mobility of Individuals. Youth Exchanges are organized for groups of young people from different countries in order to meet, live together and work on shared projects for short periods. Usually, youth exchanges last between 5 and 21 days (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020).

**Youth leader:** "Youth leader (also mentioned as "Group leader") is an adult who accompanies the young people participating in a Youth Exchange in order to ensure their effective learning, protection and safety." (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020, p321)

**Participants:** In the context of Erasmus+, participants are the beneficiaries who are fully involved in a project. In some actions, participants receive a grant to cover their expenses, including but not limited to travel and subsistence expenditures. (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020, p323).

**Programme countries:** "EU and non-EU countries that have established a National Agency which participates fully in the Erasmus+ Programme (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020, p324)".

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Foreign language learning and motivation

Until the 1990s, motivation was regarded as a stable learner trait. According to Baloto (1996), motivation is what makes us act; it is a desire to work towards a goal or to reach an objective. According to Lasagabaster, Doiz and Sierra (2014), motivation is a crucial aspect of second language learning. According to Pintrich & Schunk (1996), motivation lies at the heart of all classroom practises. Keller (1983) described ability and motivation as the primary sources of variation in educational achievement. Key notions of motivation are involvement and effort. Learners who have high levels of motivation try to do their best while learning and they are more active during the learning process.

Motivational factors trigger learners' learning strategies that enable them to grasp the language. Learning strategies are techniques that students implement as they wish to boost the effectiveness of their learning performance (Dörnyei 2001). Dörnyei (2001) summarizes motivation by stating that motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it. The best-known constructs regarding motivation for foreign language learning are integrative motivation and instrumental motivation based on the significant work of Gardner (1985, 1989). Instrumental motivation results from recognition of the practical advantages of learning, and it is identified when learners say that they want to learn the target language to pass examinations or for economic or social advancement. Integrative motivation is determined when learners state that they want to learn a foreign language because they are attracted to the target language culture or group or the language itself (Dörnyei 2001). It is widely accepted in most learning fields that motivation is essential for success. Without motivation, teaching process will be nothing but a failure and unnecessary effort. According to Crookes and Schmidt (1991), attitudes and motivation are interrelated.

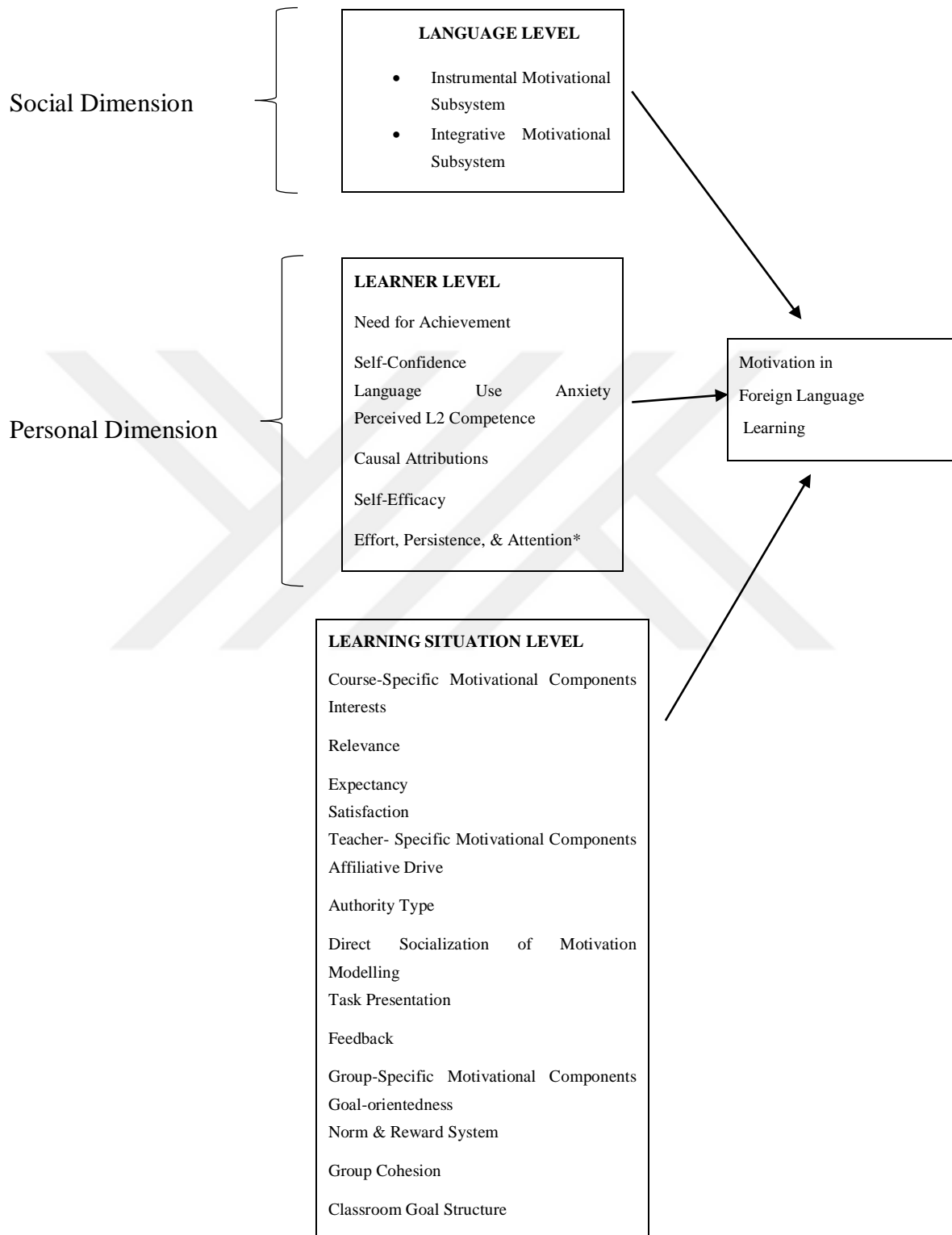
In short, motivation is defined as a collection and combination of goal-oriented behaviours. Learners' determination, efforts and desire to reach the set goals decide the level of motivation. Ryan, Giles and Sebastian (1982, p7.) define attitudes as "any affective, cognitive or behavioural index of evaluative reactions towards different language varieties

or their speakers". Table 1. Components of Foreign Language Learning Motivation which is adapted from Dörnyei, (1994, p.280) divides social and personal dimensions in terms of language level and learning situation level to have a better understanding of the importance of motivation in foreign language learning.



Table 1.

*Aspects/ Dimensions Components / Constructsof Language of Motivation in FLL*



\*These elements are not included in the original approach.

### **2.1.1. Intrinsic motivation**

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), intrinsic motivation is the "doing" of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequences. It is not only the cause of actions but also an outcome (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Ushioda, 1996; Van Lier, 1996). The research of Csizer and Dönryei (2005) showed that intrinsic motivation is the most influential determinant of motivation. According to Harmer (2007), most researchers and methodologist have come to the agreement that intrinsic motivation produces better results than its extrinsic counterpart. In Turkey, most English learners' primary aim to learn a new language is to get a job or to get a promotion. However, intrinsic motivation factors such as being able to communicate with foreigners and being able to read and understand a book published in another foreign language come later. While teaching, teachers need to observe the way students get motivated. All students are motivated to achieve certain specific goals; on the other hand, the goals of students and the education system may be mismatched. If students are studying the course material to pass the course rather than to learn the content, it means that they do not illustrate intrinsic and long-lasting motivation but have the extrinsic motivation and they are not willing to learn the content.

### **2.1.2 Extrinsic motivation**

Contrary to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation refers to a set of performance and behaviour to attain some other outcome. Extrinsic motivation is the result of any number of outside factors (Harmer, 2007). This type of motivation occurs when the learner utilizes the target language as a tool to achieve the goals he aims. To be more specific, the learner is eager to learn the target language as a step to obtain a socially good position such as getting a good career, a white-collar job, better shift times and relaxing atmosphere. Learners who have such motivation can be highly motivated when the expected reward play a significantly important role in learners' experience. Previous studies have pointed out that individuals that are not interested and did not show willingness in engaging an activity were part of the exercise due to external rewards. Deci (1971) mentions the reward like money, and Lepper et al. (1973) identifies it as points.

As opposed to intrinsic motivation, which includes recreation, endurance and psychological comfort (Deci and Ryan, 2008), extrinsic motivation factors are considered to be favourable when promoting behavioural actions that are not intrinsically motivated. However, Deci (1980) elaborated his original research findings via cognitive evaluation theory and stated

that receiver's interpretation of the extrinsic rewards affect the level of extrinsic motivation, which might lead to discount or loss of motivation as the importance of the extrinsic reward might not have the same perception on the receiver as the days pass.

### **2.1.3. Speaking skills**

Language is composed of four different skills: writing, speaking, listening and reading. Larsen- Freeman (1991, 2003) implies that grammar should be considered as a fifth skill rather than as a specific set of rules to be taught by a teacher for presentations and drills. Language skills are divided into two groups, called productive and receptive skills. While reading and listening are receptive skills through which learners are provided with target language input, writing and speaking are productive skills through which learners are expected to produce output. Productive skills are major elements for the teachers to check whether the topic in question has been grasped by the learner. Language teachers also use productive skills as a reflection of the learning progress and analyze these outputs to check learners' needs. Productive skills are also major elements for learners to check their progress in the target language and motivate themselves to improve. Learners who are successful in productive skills can gain or improve motivation to be involved in lessons and to improve their proficiency level quickly. In addition to that, speaking ability in a foreign language plays a more significant role from a methodological point of view as it is a medium of interaction and use in social life. On the other hand, there is a correlation between input and output skills. While designing the topics and contents for receptive skills, teachers should consider demographic varieties such as learners' age, interests, gender as well as their foreign language proficiency levels. Besides, the topics should be up to date, realistic and debatable. In addition to the importance of receptive skills, According to Shumin (2002), learners' speaking skill is affected by the following factors;

1. Grammatical Competence
2. Discourse Competence
3. Sociolinguistic Competence
4. Strategic Competence

According to Shumin (2002, p. 207), grammatical competence develops morphology, syntax, vocabulary and mechanics, which allows learners to comprehend and use structures of the language both fluently and accurately. Discourse competence is related to sentences, and learners should obey cohesion and

coherence rules to hold meaningful communication. According to Scarcella & Oxford (1992), effective speakers should learn a lot of structures and discourse markers to state their idea, relationship of time, cause and reason, contrast and emphasis. Sociolinguistic competence is related to the social and cultural knowledge of target language users. According to Shumin (2002), learners should learn the norm and rules of appropriate timing and realize speech acts. In a social context, learners should encode and decode the discourse correctly to adapt their style of speaking (Brown 1994, p. 238). Strategic competence is about manipulating language and dealing with communicative goals (Brown, 1994, p. 238) Strategic competence enables speakers to take action, start and finish a conversation, comprehend problems and breakdowns in the communication.

#### **2.1.3.1. Speaking fluency**

The exact definition of fluency has been discussed in many SLA studies since the mid-1950s. McClain and Zohn (1952) mention two factors that prevent the success in fluency: (1) pressure that students face passing exams, (2) desperate position of many language teachers today who are duty-bound to spread themselves out over many different subjects. Lennon (1990, 2000) defines fluency as general (oral) proficiency that includes smoothness and effortlessness of speech. Skehan (2009) promoted the view that fluency can be divided into breakdown, speed and repair fluency. Speed fluency deals with the rate and density of the speech while repair fluency deals with the repetitions and corrections. Though different definitions and frameworks can be applied to our productive and receptive skills, the researcher focuses on fluency in speaking skills in this research.

Oral proficiency has several separate components on its frame such as pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, lexical variation, smoothness and effortlessness. Also, Speaking as a receptive skill is a cognitive process during which the learner needs to be creative and capable of combining several subcomponents such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, intelligibility, accuracy and other temporal features.

#### **2.1.4. Factors preventing the success in foreign language speaking**

When learning English is not integrated into daily life, both students and teachers need to overcome major issues standing between students and their learning. Motivation is one of these issues. According to Bahous et al. (2011), motivating students in EFL settings to learn English is more complicated than it seems. EFL learners question even the necessity of learning English as English is not spoken or practised outside of their classes.

Another major factor is the competence of the teachers who are the primary source of information, influencers and moderators of the class. Teachers, who have low motivation, job satisfaction, insufficient training and who are not eager to adapt themselves to recent technological developments and new approaches in ELT and unaware of the needs of the students undermine the foreign language education. As mentioned earlier, the teachers are the main source of information in classes, and if they do not care about the needs and differences of the students and only follow the national curriculum, they cannot be expected to motivate all the students in the class. Although many books try to follow recent trends in teaching approaches and methodologies, the topics and content they have might be obsolete and might not attract learners' attention. So the learners may think that the environment created for their learning process is artificial, and this will definitely lead to a lack of motivation in learners.

However, thanks to task-based and communicative instruction models, communicative activities seem to have gained an important place in the classroom environment. Thanks to this model and activities, the learning process of the learners are designed considering the communicative purpose. These activities aim to develop oral competencies for real life or real life-like situations.

Last but not least, there is the factor of national curriculum and examination procedures in educational systems. Secondary school students are expected to be successful in High School Entrance Exams, and high school students are expected to be successful in two separate University Entrance Exams in Turkey. Therefore, engaging students in communicative activities is neglected as a result of focusing solely on test-oriented grammar drills and vocabulary activities while communicative objectives are pushed aside (Al Hosni,2014; Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan,2010; Brooks& Wilson, 2014). As a consequence of above-mentioned factors, the learners are negatively conditioned towards the whole learning process. The elements discussed above can lead to a negative attitude, lack of motivation and self-confidence, which is what Krashen (1988) calls shortly as "affective filter". Krashen argued that people with a high affective filter would lower their intake, whereas people with low affective filter allow more input into their language acquisition device. Krashen also argued that people acquire the second language as long as they obtain comprehensible input and if their affective filter is low enough to allow the input "in".

#### **2.1.4.1 Anxiety in foreign language learning**

Although anxiety has long been in the centre of many research in different fields, it has been just a few decades since it was accepted as a significant effect in foreign language learning. According to Spielberger (2013), Anxiety is considered as a part of human nature that comes with fear. Spielberger (1983) defines anxiety as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with the arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (as cited in Horwitz, E.K, Horwitz, M. B. & Cope 1986, p.125). Horwitz and Cope (1986;132) pointed out that "since peaking in the target language seems to be the most threatening aspect of foreign language learning, the current emphasis on the development of communicative competences poses particularly great difficulties for anxious student". According to Sarugül (2000), Anxiety has long-lasting and far-reaching effects which lead students to even give up on their majors. Research carried out by Dil (2009) proved that anxiety is one of several serious obstacles that EFL students face in Turkey. Horwitz et al. (1986) mentioned that anxiety in foreign language learning is closely associated with three components of performance anxiety:

1. Communication Apprehension: a type of shyness characterized by the fear of or anxiety about communicating with people
2. Test anxiety: a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure
3. Fear of Negative Evaluation: apprehension that others will evaluate them negatively (p.127-128)

Besides this classification, Horwitz et al. (1986) felt the need for an anxiety scale, and they developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Horwitz& Young (1991) administered the scale, and the research results stated that learners who had a high level of anxiety tended to evade learning a foreign language as much as they could. They thought they had to have foreign language education for their social and economic concerns. In addition, learners who had a moderate level of anxiety hesitated to do their assignments they were reluctant to speak and sat in the back seat to isolate themselves. Students who had a low level of anxiety performed better than the ones with a high level of anxiety. Speaking anxiety can develop due to several reasons. There might be a negative speaking experience that serves as the activating event. The learners who had the inability to perform speaking due to fear or bad experience can develop anticipatory anxiety. This kind of anxiety can interfere with the ability of the learner to develop speaking strategies. As Aydın

mentions (2001), interviews and diaries, which were created as qualitative tools, also contributed to a better understanding of the development of anxiety. In short, there are multiple factors that lead to anxiety in foreign language learning at different levels. However, this is a part of human nature, and both teacher and learners need to develop strategies to overcome anxiety.

### **2.1.5. Good learner characteristics in foreign language learning**

Another line of inquiry which teases out educational fields is the definition of what a "good learner" is. Rubin and Thompson (1982) mention good learner as students who can find their own way without being guided by the teacher through learning tasks. Good learners are the intellectuals that are creative, not afraid of making mistakes, make intelligent guesses, create opportunities to practice the target language, and learn from their mistakes as well. Good learners also use contextual clues and bottom-up strategies. Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada developed a scale that summarises the main consensus about good learner characteristics. According to Lightbown and Spada (2006:55), a good learner:

1. is a willing and accurate guesser
2. tries to get a message across even if specific language knowledge is lacking
3. is ready to make mistakes
4. continually looks for patterns in the language
5. practices as often as possible
6. analyzes his or her own speech and the speech of others
7. cares about whether his or her performance meets the standards
8. enjoys grammar exercises
9. begins learning in childhood
10. has above- average IQ
11. has good academic skills
12. has a good self-image and lots of confidence

Besides these qualities of a good learner, Willing (1987) suggested four different learner categories:

*Convergers:* These type of learners are independent, not willing to take part in group works as they are confident in their abilities. They are analytic thinkers, and they create their own way of learning.

*Conformists:* These type of learners prefer non-communicative classrooms where they are dependent on teachers, and they prefer to see well-organized teachers.

*Concrete learners:* These types of learners are similar to conformists except that they also enjoy the communicative classroom and social aspects of the language. They enjoy group works and games in the school.

*Communicative learners:* These type of students are oriented in language use. They show a high level of confidence, and they are eager to practice the target language out of the classroom to use the language as a tool to have social interaction with other speakers of a language. They are happy to operate without any guidance.

## **2.2. European Union**

The last century experienced socially, culturally, politically and economically rapid changes due to the developments in science and technology. The effects of these rapid changes and transformations are seen all around the world. The most concrete example of this is seen among the countries in Europe. European countries united to protect their power against other influential countries and to be more effective in the international politics area (Akbaş & Özdemir, 2002). European Union was established in the mid-1950s as the European Economic Community. This community initially created to have a sustainable, long term trading system, later started to produce partnerships and projects in social areas, including education and culture.

Just after the foundation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958, Turkey applied to be one of the member countries in 1959. The Ministers Council of the community gave consent to the application of Turkey and Ankara Agreement was signed and entered into force between EEC and Turkey until membership requirements are fulfilled by Turkey. Since that date, social, cultural, political and economic work is carried out between Turkey and the EU in order to ensure the adaptation period is completed successfully. Since 1990, education has played a more important role than any other fields due to the decisions of the EU Commission (Akbaş & Özdemir, 2002). However, Turkey started to get a share from these grants only after 1991 Helsinki Summit, when its official candidacy began. In this context, The Frame Work Agreement, which allowed Turkey to benefit from the EU

programs, was approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 2002 and came into force. Thanks to the Frame Work Agreement, Turkish National Agency, which is the legal state authority to coordinate the projects and relations regarding educational purposes, completed preliminary studies in 2003 and started to implement Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth Exchange projects until 2006. After the successful completion of these projects, Life-Long Learning and Youth Exchange projects were implemented between the years 2007 and 2013. Finally, the program changed its name as "Erasmus+ Program", and several projects which will be defined and explained in the following chapter have been implemented from 2014 to the present day.

### **2.2.1. European union education policies**

Education has been continuously emphasized in every treaty signed by the EU since it was first mentioned in the agreement of Rome. Education policies are mostly emerged to fulfil the needs of the EU internal market, and the agreement of Rome also emphasized the importance of vocational education. Through establishment efforts, free travel, recognition of diplomas and degrees and promotion of language were mentioned, and vocational training was also emphasised explicitly towards the goal of economic development. The first meeting of ministers of education in 1971 urged that vocational training cooperation be reflected in other educational fields by referring to the basis of collaboration. In the second meeting, they stated that the economy should not be the only focus in education, and they identified some priority fields. These fields are; providing excellent education opportunities to member and non-member countries, establishing cooperation in the education system, in higher education and in higher education institution development, developing joint accreditation and promotion of foreign language teaching, and equal education in all fields( Onursal- Beşgöl, 2013: 160)

In the following years, the issue of education was discussed widely, and 1986-1989 Education Programs were accepted under the supervision of the Commission. The main target of this program was to support students, trainees, skilled workers who participated in the program through joint pilot projects on an international scale by supporting enterprises, sharing information in the field of education and comparative studies. Life-Long Learning area is introduced in the 1990s to find solutions to the problems that emerged with globalization. (Onursal-Beşgöl, 2013: 162). Within Life Long Learning frame, all education programs (Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig) were restructured. Erasmus+ program was launched on 01 January 2014 as a framework to support a wide range

of age groups in education, youth and sports fields. Within the Erasmus+ Program frame, beside the support for vocational education, adult education and higher education, the projects in the field of sports were also granted support according to Turkish National Agency website (06.05.2020). ([www.ua.gov.tr](http://www.ua.gov.tr))

### 2.3. European union education programs in Turkey

EU education program is an educational aid program from which member and candidate countries can benefit. It aims to improve the level of education and bring it up to desired standards.

European Education Program can be examined in four phases. These are the first phase 1974-1995, the second phase 1995-2006, the third phase 2007-2013 and the fourth phase 2014-2020.

#### 2.3.1 First phase programs (1974-1995)

The EU started the first program on vocational education in the mid-1970s. The Importance and need for a common curriculum of vocational education were emphasized in the Treaty of Rome, article 128 (Ertl, 2003). During this period, the program was mostly based and developed on the principles of the Treaty of Rome.

In the early 1990s, the first individual program classification that covers education field, content field and type of action is presented in table 2.

Table 2.

*EU Educational Programs in the 1990s.*

Name of the Program	Full Title	Education Field	Content field	Action Type
Arion (1991-1992)	Workshop visits for education experts	Schools Vocational training Higher Education	General Education Vocational Education	Projects Exchanges
Comett (1990-1994)	The community cooperation program between Universities related to technological development and industrial institutions	Vocational training Higher Education Advanced Education	New Technologies	Projects Industrial cooperation
Erasmus 1990-1994)	European Community	Higher Education	General Education	Exchanges

	Action Plan for University students' Exchange			Institutional cooperation
Eurotecnet (1990-1994)	European Action Plan to increase innovation in the field of vocational education due to technological changes	Vocational training Higher Education Advanced Education	New Technologies	Projects Webs
Force (1990-1994)	Development of continuous vocational education program	Advanced Education	Vocational Education	Projects
Lingua 1990-1994)	Action Program to increase foreign language proficiency in the EU community	Schools Vocational training Higher Education Advanced Education	Languages	Exchanges Institutional cooperation
Petra (1988-1992)	Preparing Young and adult people to their profession	Vocational training	Vocational Education	Projects Exchanges
Yes (1988-1991)	Action plan to increase youth exchanges in the EU community	Vocational training	Vocational Education	Exchanges

*Reference: Ertl, 2003*

As seen in Table 2, 8 different programs were provided during the first period of the EU education programs. They were mainly based on cooperation between industrial vocational training initially. However, later on, general education, higher education, language education and advanced education were added into the program in order to realize different purposes in different educational fields.

### **2.3.2 Second phase programs (1995-1996)**

Second Phase EU Programs were based on the principles of the EU treaty, which is also known as the Maastricht Treaty. This EU treaty focused on vocational education and training. The term "Education" was coined for the first time in the treaty. General education and Professional education gained a solid ground with the articles 126 and 127 respectively. (Ertl, 2003). During the period between 1995-1999, Leonardo, which was for vocational education, and Socrates, which was for general education, became the new programs created

for education. Unlike the previous period, these programs were characterized by the following features;

1. Even though programs of both phases retain many of their actions and goals, lifelong learning and multimedia were highlighted for the first time.
2. Programs emphasized the bottom-up approach to encourage project practitioners to present more durable projects in the following application terms.
3. Representatives between member countries and social partners were more involved in the selection and implementation phase.
4. Second phase programs introduced additional funding principles.

The primary purpose of the second phase programs was to dissipate the impact on national education systems and to increase the visibility of the results of the projects.

After the five-year period between 1995 and 1999, the funds of Leonardo and Socrates were increased, and they were expanded and extended for the following seven years. In this new extension which covers the years 1999 to 2006, Youth for Europe program was updated. Scope and types of action areas which are called Socrates-II between the years 1999 and 2006 are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.  
*Socrates Action areas between 1999 and 2006*

Name of Program	Scope	Field of Action	Types of Action
Comenius	Actions aiming to support collaboration in the educational field	School Education	School partnerships Staff training Webs Collaboration among universities
Erasmus	Actions aiming exchanges in higher education	Higher Education	Student and staff exchanges Thematic webs Cooperation
Grundtvig	Actions aiming at different education fields	Adult Education Formal and Non-formal learning Life-Long Learning	Projects Education partnerships Staff Exchanges Grundtvig webs Exchanges
Lingua	Actions aiming to learn and to teach European languages	School Education Vocational Education	Institutional cooperations Development of

		Higher Education Advanced Education	language learning aims
Minerva	Actions aiming for information and communication technologies in the education field	Mostly Open and distance education	Projects to support and to have a better understanding of reform
Arion	Actions aiming to observe and to reform the education system and policy	All Educational fields	Multinational projects to develop resources and work visits for the decision-makers in the education field

Reference: Ertl, 2002: 21.

### 2.3.3. Third phase programs (2007-2013)

Third phase programs brought vocational education, adult education, general education and higher education fields under the same roof with the name of Life Long Learning Program. The new period started on 01 January 2007. EU Education and Youth Programs lasted seven years under the umbrella of Life Long Learning Program with the participation of member states and EFTA countries. This was a framework program that replaced the two basic programs that were presented in the previous phase; Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates. Under the umbrella of this program, Jean Monnet and the Joint program (Transversal) are located as well as four sectoral programs: Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011)

1. Comenius Program: The target groups of the project are kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and education faculties. It aims to develop an understanding and knowledge of European language and cultural diversity and values among educational staff and students. In this context and with the acquisition of the necessary skills, students' personal development, improvement of the quality of education and cooperation with the countries in school education is encouraged.
2. Erasmus Program: This program aims to develop joint projects among higher education institutions, and it provides higher education staff and students with the opportunity of short term exchanges. With the bilateral agreements among universities, students have the chance to study their field in another member country. This program is also an excellent opportunity for the university staff to give lectures

as visiting educational staff. Besides, this program supports university graduates who have stepped into the business world in order to increase employability and improve cooperation between higher education institutions.

3. Leonardo da Vinci Program: This program aims to support and develop policies regarding vocational and educational cooperation between EU member and candidate countries. It also aims to strengthen and promote innovations in vocational practices. With the help of this program, public institutions, private sector and vocational education institutions realize various kinds of applications. It also supports student and staff exchange between countries.
4. Grundtvig Program: This program aims to keep the knowledge constantly changing and developing. Depending on the emerging needs in the lives of adults, it aims to help them to improve their experience and qualifications and to promote their adjustment to changes in society. Grundtvig program, which focuses on every non-formal and adult education field except for vocational education, aims to provide educational opportunities to the learner, instructor and all other personnel involved in non-formal education.
5. Joint Topic Program: Joint Topic is a program that covers two or more subprogramme activities related to the development of EU cooperation and education systems of member states, and the quality and recognition of these systems. In this program, decision-makers and education experts implement work visits to share and provide information related to preschool, primary, secondary school and vocational education.
6. Jean Monnet Program: This program is carried out to support teaching and research of intellectual activities related to the integration of the European Union. Promoting and supporting the organisations focused on these research and educational fields are among the main objectives of this program. Within the scope of this program, single and multilateral projects to develop training modules and research activities are supported.

#### **2.3.4. Fourth phase programs ( Erasmus+) (2014-2020)**

Erasmus+ (Erasmus Plus) is a new program area which is being implemented instead of the Life Long Learning and Youth Programs in the third phase between 2007 and 2013. The duration of the Erasmus+ program is six years starting from 2014. Erasmus+ aims to

increase personal development and employment regardless of peoples' age and education level while trying to support them to gain new skills. (Turkish National Agency, 2014).

Moreover, Erasmus+, which has been developed to support the efforts on the social and human possibilities impact aims to improve education, youth and life long learning perspective by supporting every aspect of education including formal and non-formal education (EC- European Commission, 2017). This program aims to develop collaboration by promoting harmony and interaction of education, training youth in various fields. It also aims to create new ideas and remove invisible boundaries in the society and business World by existing project formats (EC, 2017)

Erasmus+ program which started to be implemented on 01 January 2014 is a roof program that supports education, youth and sports and this program has gone beyond the previous versions and has become a brand name recognized by a wide range of audience. According to European Commission webpage, "Erasmus+ also aims to promote the sustainable development of its partners in the field of higher education and contribute to achieving the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy. Specific issues tackled by the program include:

1. Reducing unemployment, especially among young people
2. Promoting adult learning, especially for new skills and skills required by the labour market
3. Encouraging young people to take part in European democracy
4. Supporting innovation, cooperation and reform
5. Reducing early school leaving
6. Promoting cooperation and mobility with the EU's partner countries."

[https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en)

Erasmus+ is a program that is carried out on two axes: " centralized" and "decentralized" activities. The centralized activities are directly carried out by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency ( EACEA) of the European Commission, which is located in Brussels. The decentralized activities are carried out by the National Erasmus+ offices accredited to each member and candidate countries by the European Commission. In Turkey, Turkish National Agency (Ulusal Ajans), which was founded on January 2002 by the decree of the council of ministers, is the accredited Erasmus Office.

## 2.4. Centralized activities

Erasmus+ Centralized Activities are supported via three main actions and two special actions. According to Erasmus+ 2020 Programme Guide (2020, p.11), the main actions are, "Key Action 1 (KA1) mobility of individuals, Key Action 2 (KA2) Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practises, Key Action 3 (KA3) Support for policy reform. The special actions are Jean Monnet and Sport. Centralized activities are carried out within four different programs. The programs are shown in table 4.

Table 4.

*Programs carried out within centralized activities*

CENTRALIZED ACTIVITIES				
KEY ACTION 1	KEY ACTION 2	KEY ACTION 3	JEAN MONNET	SPORT
Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees	Capacity building in the field of youth	European Policy Experimentation	Jean Monnet Modules, Chairs and Centres of Excellence	Small collaborative partnerships
	Capacity building in the field of higher education	Social inclusion in the field of education and training	Policy debate with the academic world	Collaborative partnerships
	Sector Skills Alliances	Centres of Vocational Excellence	Jean Monnet Support to Associations	Not-for- profit European sport events
	Knowledge Alliances	European Youth Together		
	European Universities	Civil society cooperation in the field of youth		

Reference: European Commission, 2020

### 2.4.1. Key action 1 (KA1) mobility of individuals

This Key Action supports:

1. Mobility of learners and staff: This action provides opportunities for students, trainees, young people, teachers, trainers to undertake a learning and/or professional experience in another country (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020).

2. Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees: High-level integrated international study programmes delivered by consortia of higher education institutions that award full degree scholarships to the best master students worldwide ( Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020).
3. Erasmus+ Master Loans: higher education students from Programme Countries can apply for a loan backed up by the Programme to go abroad for a full Master Degree. Students should address themselves to national banks or student loan agencies participating in the scheme (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020).

#### **2.4.2. Key Action 2 (KA2) Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practises**

This Key Action supports:

1. Strategic Partnerships in the fields of Education and Youth: This key action aims to support the development and / or the transfer of innovative applications. In addition to cooperation at the European level, it seeks to encourage mutual learning and implementing joint ventures that promote sharing of good experiences.
2. Knowledge Alliances: This key action aims to strengthen the innovation capacity of Europe and aims to promote a wider socio-economic environment for higher education and business sectors.
3. Capacity Building in Higher Education and Youth: According to Erasmus+ Programme Guide (2020, p.13), "This key action aims to support internationalization, modernization and accessibility in higher education by using online platforms such as eTwinning, School Education Gateway, European Platform for Adult Learning (EPALE). It also offers intercultural learning experiences between young adults in Europe and Southern Mediterranean countries".

#### **2.4.3. Key Action 3 (KA3) Support for Policy Reform**

Key Action 3 Support for Policy Reform is an action program which aims to support initiatives towards policy innovation, policy instruments in the field of education and youth. It also promotes cooperation among international institutions and organizations.

#### **2.4.4. Jean monnet activities**

This program supports associations that are dealing with policy discussions related to the academic community, centres of excellence. It aims to enhance employability and improve career prospects for young graduates. Three different types of activities are supported within this program; Teaching and Research activities, Support to Associations and Policy debate with the Academic World. These opportunities are available to higher institutions, and individual applications are not accepted.

#### **2.4.5. Sports activities**

This program aims to promote voluntary activities, social inclusion, equal opportunities, and fight against doping, match-fixing, violence and intolerance and discrimination in sport. Three different actions are supported within this program; Collaborative Partnerships, Small Collaborative Partnerships and Not-for-Profit European Sports Events. The activities carried out within this framework are also expected to contribute to the implementation of the European Week of Sport, which is an initiative set out by the European Commission to promote sport and physical activities.

#### **2.5. Key action 1 (KA1) mobility of individuals youth exchanges**

Located under the Key Action 1 (KA1) Mobility of Individuals, Youth Exchanges aims to offer the opportunity to learn about cultures and gather youth groups from different countries around. "Youth Exchange" provides an opportunity for young groups to carry out projects for up to 21 days. During a YE, the participants carry out the activity program prepared and designed jointly. YE develop competences; awareness of socially relevant issues and thematic areas, new lifestyles, custom primarily through peer education discover styles. It also allows the strengthening of values such as solidarity, democracy and friendship. Non-formal education methods are utilized during the learning process in a YE. Youth Exchanges depend on transnational cooperation between two or more institutions or organisations from program countries or neighbouring partner countries. The good foreign language proficiency level is NOT required to participate in a YE. The countries eligible to implement Youth Exchanges are listed in Table 5.

Table 5.

*Eligible Countries to implement Youth Exchanges.*

Program Countries – European Union Member Countries			
Belgium	Greece	Lithuania	Portugal
Bulgaria	Spain	Luxemburg	Romania
Czechia	France	Hungary	Slovenia
Denmark	Croatia	Malta	Slovakia
Germany	Italy	Holland	Finland
Estonia	Cyprus	Austria	Sweden
Ireland	Letonia	Poland	United Kingdom
Program Countries – Non-EU Member Countries			
Northern Macedonia	Liechtenstein	Serbia	
Iceland	Norway	Turkey	
EU Neighbour Partner Countries			
Eastern Partner Countries:	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine		
Southern Mediterranean Countries:	Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Libia, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Russia		
Western Balkans:			
Other:			

People from the age of 13 to 30 can apply for these projects as a delegation of Non-Governmental Organisation, organisation, public institution, or independent, informal youth group. There is no age limit for the delegation leader, who is also called the youth leader.

### **2.5.1. The Importance of key action 1 (KA1) mobility of individuals youth exchanges in the research**

This program is at the centre of this research for various reasons. The first reason is that this program is open but not limited to formal education institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations, informal groups etc. and it provides opportunities for the people whose ages range from 13 to 30. Non-Governmental Organisations, Not-for-profit organisations, local public organisations or institutions or independent youth groups can take part in these activities. This is an excellent opportunity for the researcher to see the effects of motivation and power of non-formal education on participants who have completed their formal education period without any experience of studying abroad. "Every young person should have the opportunity to take part in some form of mobility, whether this is during their studies or training, in the form of a work placement, or in the context of voluntary activities."(European Union 2008; EPLM n.d.: 2).

The second reason why this program is at the centre of the research is that it enables out-of-class activities and learning by doing experience that foreign language learners in Turkey are not accustomed to. The researcher believes that the KA1 Mobility of Individuals Youth Exchanges is the best program to infer the language-related impact of European Union Programs.

Youth Exchanges program allows a group of young people from at least two different countries to get together and carry out the project together. The duration of the YE projects may range from 5 to 21 days (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020). In other words, YE actions are carried out via "Learning mobility". Learning mobility is a phenomenon that is spreading across Europe, both informal and non-formal context (Kristensen, 2017). Learning mobility is identified as cross-border mobility carried out for educational purposes for a specific period of time (European Platform on Learning Mobility, 2013). A policy paper from the European Commission (2011, p. 199) outlines the rationale for the phenomenon in the following terms:

"Learning mobility, meaning transnational mobility for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge, skills and competences, is one of the fundamental ways in which young people can strengthen their future employability, as well as their intercultural awareness, personal development, creativity and active citizenship. Europeans who are mobile as young learners are more likely to be mobile as workers later in life."

## **2.6. Activities carried out in youth exchanges**

The activities carried out during the implementation of the YE project are jointly prepared and designed by the participants before the realization of the project. The activities are topic related and aim to develop personal competences, social inclusion, social awareness and intrapersonal skills of the participants. During the implementation of the activities, non-formal education methods are used, and the projects are realized via indoor and outdoor activities. The initial aim in the YE projects is to keep interaction at the highest level to maintain a friendly atmosphere. Activities such as icebreakers, cultural nights promote a floor where participants socialize and get to know each other. Cultural night event is also a great opportunity for participants to present his/ her culture and lifestyle. Cultural night events aim to develop cultural awareness and vanish discrimination. Formal education methods such as lecturing, presentation, reading a book is not allowed in this program. Activities are carried out with the help of youth trainers and youth leaders. Youth leader or

trainers does not act as a teacher or lecturer but a mentor and facilitator of the event. The aim of the activity is not given in advance. Instead, participants are asked about what they have learned from the activity after its implementation. Team activity constitutes a significant component of YE projects. Teams are created as multinational groups. Each group consists of at least one participant from a different country. Teams are mostly valid until the end of the project duration, and the teams are not expected to change every day. Each team aims to cooperate and work faster than others to win the games, which creates ties and team spirit in each team. Team collaboration, peer work, top-down and bottom-up learning strategies of the participants are expected to increase. The other facility that makes YE different from other programs is that participants coming from different countries spend the full duration of the project together. YE projects are carried out in a specific facility such as a hotel, a village house, a villa that provides enough space to implement the projects and accommodation and boarding opportunity for all participants. Participants are not expected and allowed to stay anywhere other than specified premises in the project. Participants share the rooms and facilities in the accommodation place. They spend 24/7 hours together. Therefore, before and after the activities, participants are still connected to one another, and they share the facility opportunities together. This also helps to create a relax zone and foster solidarity and sincerity among participants. In some projects, participants are expected to do daily chores such as washing the dishes, setting the table, cooking the meals, cleaning the garden, collecting the tools used for the activity. These tasks are done in turns among groups with the aim of developing teamwork and a sense of responsibility among participants. In most projects, one day of the scheduled program is spared to sightseeing. During sightseeing activity, teams are still valid, and they are expected to move together. However, local participants are distributed to each team to guide them if needed. Different city activities are also implemented in sightseeing activities. For example; Some pictures and a map is given to each team, and they are asked to speak to the local people to ask for directions to the objects in the pictures, and they are expected to take a picture or video in front of the object. The activities, spare time opportunities, the way of implementation of YE Project meets most requirements of non-formal education, and all of the elements mentioned above make YE the best program to see the good implementation of non-formal education and to see the outputs of non-formal education.

## **2.7. Non-formal education**

Coombs (1968) was the first person to mention the concept of "non-formal education (NFE)". According to Coombs and Ahmed (1968), non-formal education is an organized and systematic educational activity. Non-formal education is carried out outside the scheme of a formal system to implement selected types of learning on particular subgroups in the population: adults as well as youngsters and children. As inferred from the definition, NFE can take place in different forms such as sightseeing, weekend activity, holiday and afterschool programs. One of the most crucial parts of NFE is socialization. La Belle (1982) developed the concept of NFE and mentioned that NFE could take part in schools as extra-curricular activities. Later on, Hoppers (2000) divided non-formal education into three different categories: supplementary NFE which is carried out to enrich the activities, compensatory NFE which helps people that have no access to education due to several reasons, alternative NFE which is an alternative to formal education needs. The learning process in YE is strongly fostered by applying non-formal education methods (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020).

### **2.7.1. Importance of non-formal education in youth exchanges**

Non-Formal Education fosters social interaction among different groups by creating flexible atmosphere. Rather than a teacher-oriented structure of formal education, NFE focuses on the needs of the learner and outputs of the activities. Non-formal education takes place in any situation and area, unlike formal education, where learners are passive and seated in their desks. Learners feel in the middle of the action and education process is not mentioned explicitly. NFE pays attention to the social development of the learners, while formal education mostly focuses on academic achievement. Normally, Youth Exchanges are expected to experience various negative factors on participants such as being in a different country, culture, weather, meeting new people from different lifestyles and speaking a foreign language during the project. However, the implementation of NFE methods in the youth exchanges fosters social cohesion and adaptation.

According to Brian et al. (2009), five domains of "good" teaching in NFE settings emerged: "Good" teaching is (1) grounded in relationships, (2) flexible and adaptive, (3) identifiable in audience non-verbals, (4) similar to the theatre, and (5) mastering the fundamentals. Like informal education, non-formal education is also planned and structured; however, non-formal education takes place outside of a formal classroom setting. Non-formal education

mainly includes active learning techniques including but not limited to group works, and role-plays, debates (Cooper and Robinson, 2000; Fuhrman and Ladewig, 2008). Fuhrman et al. (2005) discovered that participatory approaches to learning, especially cooperative learning activities, helped students improve their attitudes toward the subject matter.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research methodology

As this study aims to analyze the views of EU Erasmus+ Programme Mobility of Individuals Key Action 1 (KA1) YE Projects' participants on speaking skill fluency and foreign language learning motivation, the researcher preferred a qualitative research model standardized open-ended interview to apply to the participants. The research aims to explore the following questions:

1. What are the participants' views regarding the contribution of EU Erasmus+ Youth Exchange Projects to their English speaking skills?
2. What are the participants' views regarding the contribution of EU Erasmus+ Youth Exchange Projects to their English learning motivation?

##### 3.1.1. Qualitative research

Strauss and Corbin describe qualitative research as " any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 10-11). According to Holloway (1997), qualitative research is a social inquiry form, and it focuses on how people use the inference, interpretation skills considering their social life and background information. Qualitative research model consists of several different approaches, most of which aim to comprehend a social reality, beliefs, values, perspective of individuals, groups and nations. The main aim of the researcher in using qualitative research model in this study is to explore the attitude, perception, behaviour and experiences of the participants towards Youth Exchanges effect of foreign language motivation and speaking skills proficiency.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.4) who are the influential theorists in the qualitative research field, define qualitative research as:

" Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the World. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practises that make the World visible. These practices transform the World. They turn the World into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos

to the self. Qualitative researchers study things in natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them."

As Glaser and Strauss (1967) discussed in the book *Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Qualitative research brought a new perspective to the research in the field of social sciences. Traditional theories see the facts with the same eye, and therefore they are insufficient to explain the constantly changing social phenomena.

### **3.2. Coding in qualitative data**

Meghan Cope (2010) defines coding as a process of identifying, organizing and categorizing data in qualitative research. Coding enables researchers to discuss the data in several different ways. Coding enables research to partly reduce data by distilling along with key themes. As Lefebvre (1991, p.105) noted: "Reduction is a scientific procedure designed to deal with the complexity and chaos of brute observation". Depending on the goals of the researchers, a different coding system can be utilized in the same data. Coding is used to support a theory or hypothesis in a deductive manner (Cope, 2010). "The organizing part will entail some system for categorizing the various chunks [ words, phrases, paragraphs ], so the researcher can quickly find, pull out and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct, or theme" (Miles and Huberman 1994,57). Coding also opens the opportunity for reflexivity, a critical self-evaluation of the research process (Cope, 2010).

The coding process involves recognizing (seeing) a vital moment and encoding it (seeing it as something) before a process of interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). The researcher utilizes inductive coding method, which allows the theory to emerge from the content of the raw data. By applying Inductive Coding, the researcher carefully read the text, considered multiple meanings that are inherent in the documents. The researcher then identified text segments that contain meaning units and created a label for each category. Transcripts were also read "horizontally" to categorize the layers of the texts.

As Marshall (1999, p.419) advised, "coding and categorizing were carried out until no new themes emerged, which suggested that the researcher identified major themes".

The researcher analyzed the interviews in 8 different categories by using MAXQDA 2018 application. MAXQDA is a software programme designed by Verbi GmbH in 1995 and

released in 2019 for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods research. It allows researchers to collect, transcribe, organize, code, analyze and visualize the data.

1. Level of Foreign Language
2. Motivational development
3. Fluency development
4. Opportunity to practice
5. Comments on previous fluency
6. Negative comments on Turkish Education System
7. Educational equality provided by Erasmus + projects
8. Follow-up activities carried out after projects

For the validity and reliability of the research, the coding, data analysis and the findings have been reviewed by an expert.

### **3.3. The participants and data collection**

According to Dörnyei (2001), the main goal of sampling in qualitative data is to find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximize what we can learn. Therefore, the distribution of experience in the population and how the respondent sample is represented is not relevant in qualitative research. Data for this study came from open-ended structured interviews. Interview questions have been developed about EU youth exchange projects, activities in the projects, personal views about the importance of projects on English speaking development and English learning motivation (see Appendix A) . The researcher kindly asked expert opinions from Associate Professors who work in ELT and Testing and Evaluation Department in Trakya University to review the questions in the interview and research questions. After their approval, the researcher started to contact the authorities of the institutions that are involved in EU Youth Exchange projects. Turkish National Agency (NA) keeps archives for each project evaluation and publishes the accepted results on its website. The results page posted by Turkish NA has information about the name of the institution, the topic of the project, and the total amount of money granted for each project. After investigating and contacting several institutions, the researcher realized that there are hundreds of NGOs involved in the Youth Exchange Projects, and most of them were not willing to cooperate or to be involved

in the research. Therefore, the researcher initially conducted convenience sampling method and contacted to Edirne Nature Sports Association, and Sakarya Cycling and Nature Sports association, both of which were institutions that the researcher had contacted in advance and which were willing to cooperate. The researcher was given a list of NGO members that took part in Youth Exchanges, and 15 people were contacted. However, 2 people were not willing to take part in the projects because of their time constraints. 7 members of the Edirne Nature Sports Association and 6 members of Sakarya Cycling and Nature sports Association were willing to take part in the research. 8 face to face and five online interviews were carried out. Face to face interviews were carried out in a quiet place within reach of the researcher and interviewees. Online interviews were carried out via Skype when the researcher and interviewees created a calm atmosphere. This organisation was carefully operated to protect the privacy of the participants (Plano Clark, 2011)

The researcher initially used a convenience sampling method and a total of 13 Turkish Youth Exchange participants who fully taken part in Youth exchanges were interviewed. However, due to external factors such as age, educational background and level of English, 3 participants' interviews were excluded during the analysis process. Therefore, the research utilizes purposive sampling method. The researcher was assured by involved participants that they had not been involved in any other type of Erasmus+ programme action except for YE projects. This issue is regarded as critical by the researcher for both validity and reliability of the research.

As a result, the research was conducted with 5 male and 5 female participants who had a university degree and stated their foreign language level to be at least three and above. Seven face to face and three online interviews were analyzed in the research. Three online interviews were carried out due to the fact that interviewees reside in a distant part of the country. Initially, the researcher believed that online interviews would damage the validity and reliability image of the research. However, Clarke (2000, p.7) mentions the benefits of the online qualitative research as follows;

“‘Communication facilitation' and ‘practical and economic' and the limitations as ‘technological,' ‘missing cues,' and ‘skewness'. In regard to communication, she writes that online methodologies overcome barriers of time-zones and geography. Other benefits include the documentation of communication, active participation and engagement, honesty, and critical review of submissions prior to posting. She lists the practical and economic benefits noting "online interviewing is easily

negotiated through applications; reduced travel, venue and transcribing costs; reduced need for synchronous interview times; access costs reduced by reading and composing interactions off-line; easy communication storage and archiving; ease of distribution of discourse interpretations to participants for evaluation; and ease of publishing and updating results online."

Participants are coded, and the information about the participants are given in table 6.

Table 6.

*Information About Participants*

Code	Gender	Age	Level of Education	Level of English (1: lowest, 5: Highest)
P1	Male	30	University (ELT)	4
P2	Female	29	University (Turkish Language Teaching)	3
P3	Female	30	University (ELT)	5
P4	Female	28	University (Agricultural Engineering)	2
P5	Male	28	University (ELT)	4
P6	Female	27	University (Business Administration)	4
P7	Male	29	University ( Physical Education)	3
P8	Female	27	University (International Relations)	5
P9	Female	31	University (ELT)	5
P10	Male	29	University (ELT)	4

### 3.4. Data analysis

For data analysis, the researcher used the Content Analysis Method, which has become closely associated with qualitative research to identify important aspects of the content of the interviews and present these essential aspects of the content clearly and effectively. Baran et al. (2004, p410) stated Content analysis as *"the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the content of communication"* the aim of the researcher by using content analysis research method is to determine the presence of certain words, concepts,

themes, phrases within texts and sets of texts and to evaluate this presence in an objective manner. The researcher follows the steps of content analysis method as follows; firstly, the data collected for the research were read in detail. Secondly, units and categories of the analysis and a set of rules for coding were developed and finally, the data were coded according to the rules set by the researcher. The researcher believes that Content Analysis provides interpretive analysis by going deeper into the underlying meaning of the data considering the focus of this study.



## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

Since its first introduction in 2014, Erasmus+ has contributed a lot to personal development and employment of students and instructors supporting both educational and social processes. By the mobility actions including Youth Exchange projects, Erasmus+ offers numerous side benefits to its beneficiaries.

The research revealed that the participants involved in the EU Erasmus+ Youth Exchange (YE) projects think that they have improved their English Speaking Fluency and their English learning motivation. YE curriculum follows Non-Formal Education (NFE) methods. Each project organizer manages the projects or hires an experienced trainer to manage the project activities. The NFE activities carried out during the projects help participants feel free by creating a fruitful atmosphere in which the learning process is carried out inductively and out of class. The participants are expected to learn by doing, experiencing, discovering as individuals and/or as teams. The facilities provided during the projects also have significant contributions to participants' language development and motivation. Youth Exchange participants are expected to move as a group, and they are not allowed to stay alone or move out of the project area. It is mandatory for participants to reside in the specific accommodation facility provided by the organizer. This requirement keeps all participants in the same facility for approximately a week. This results in fast learning and integration.

Another feature of the projects that foster speaking fluency development is the intercultural nights organized in almost every project. The participants are informed about the process of intercultural nights before their mobility, and they are expected to bring cultural objects such as food, accessory, drinks or dress. The objects brought from the homeland are presented during the intercultural nights. Songs of the participants' origin language are played, and folk dances are performed during projects. These activities are regarded as informal presentations of the countries, and the participants try their best to introduce their cultures and countries. These activities have an immensely positive effect on foreign language learning motivation and language learning motivation. The participants who present their countries develop their speaking skills and perform a public speech in front of other participants and the listening participants are generally quite motivated to listen to the presentations of their friends as

they are mostly willing to understand the country, culture and daily habits of their friends. The organizers keep in touch with the participants in advance, and their individual requirements are taken into consideration before the participants' arrival. The mobility, medical condition and food preferences are accounted for and procured in advance. In other words, the atmosphere is moulded according to the needs of the program and participants, which brings out a comfortable atmosphere and lead to motivate participants to achieve the goals of learning without stress or any other external worries.

In the Table 7 the results were summarised to give the readers a general idea about the findings. The detail findings can be found in the following sections.

Table 7  
*Summary of the Findings*

Codes	F
Motivational Development	21
Fluency Development	33
Opportunity to Practice	69
Comments on Previous Fluency	6
Negative Comments on Turkish Education System	10
Educational Equality provided by Erasmus +	5
Follow-up activities after the projects	8

#### **4.1. Fluency development**

The first research question aims to unearth the participants' views regarding the contribution of Erasmus+ to their speaking skills. All of the 10 participants involved in the project clearly stated that they had improved their foreign language proficiency.

P1 noted, "I can frankly say that both projects I participated in have definitely improved my English speaking skills." P2 mentioned, "I definitely think that I have gained fluency." P3 said " Yes I definitely gained fluency. I started to speak without fear of making mistakes, and I began to talk more freely and spontaneously." P4 pointed out "I absolutely think that it has improved my speaking skills." P5 said, " It helped me to relieve the excitement about

speaking English, by improving my speaking skills." P6 mentioned, "Communicating with people from different countries enhanced my English speaking skills in a significantly positive manner." P7 stated, "I absolutely think that it has contributed to my English speaking skills." P8 mentioned, "the project contributed to my English speaking skill, I was able to express myself more clearly and my speaking skills improved with people from other countries." P9 said, "I definitely think that it has improved my English speaking skills." And P10 stated that "I think that the projects have contributed to my English speaking skills."

The European Union Youth Exchange Projects are implemented to set out an international atmosphere for participants and help them to develop many skills, broaden their horizon, and educate them in different settings and themes. Youth Exchange Projects take advantage of Non-Formal Education methods during the implementation of projects. The activities are conducted by skilled youth workers or trainers, who are well-educated and trained implementers of Non-Formal Education methods. EU Youth Exchange projects involve teenagers and young adults from EU member countries, candidate countries and neighbouring countries in the program, and the program provides many opportunities, including foreign language speaking skills improvement.

#### **4.1.1. Fluency development and activities**

The researcher asked further questions to unearth what made participants think that the projects developed their fluency. It was found that active learning techniques including but not limited to group works, role plays and debates designed within NFE methods foster communication among participants, and this leads to an opportunity to practice the foreign language. This finding matches the results of Cooper and Robinson (2000), Fuhrman and Ladewig (2008). Through the activities, "good teaching" is acquired along with good friendships, as Brian et al. (2009) stated.

P1 stated that the comfortable and friendly environment in Youth Projects helped him overcome his fear of speaking. P1 defined the friendly climate by saying "we generally carried out collaborative group works. In these events, there was a creative and comfortable environment where each participant shared his/her knowledge, made common decisions by talking together, and influenced and taught something to one another." P2 stated "There were many people from different countries and English was the only common language that we could communicate through. Since we had to speak English during the activities and spare moments, my speaking performance improved day by day." P2 also stated "Because you live

with many foreigners 7/24 hours for eight days. You are together from dusk to dawn. Speaking English on a daily basis becomes inevitable. Since you share many things together, need for and time and ways of communication increase, and so do the opportunities to use English." P4 clearly states how friendship motivates participants by saying "the activities carried out, in the beginning, are called "ice breakers". They enable participants to get to know others, learn names, and to create a friendly atmosphere. That being the case, activities increase the motivation to speak and keep it so until the last day of the projects. It is not only the activities but also people around to you that motivate you. Imagine that you are in a project with 6 participants from 8 different countries each. You are in an organisation with almost 50 people, and each person is unique. You would definitely want to meet such amazing people. You would not like to spend your hours sleeping but talking to people and getting to know them. It is almost impossible to lose your motivation in such a project. The more motivation you have, the more enjoyable the projects get. " P3 adds "these activities are much more useful than travelling abroad and meeting with local people in terms of practising a foreign language because when you participate in such projects, you always have your peers with you, and gender balance is recognized. For example, I was with almost 30 people from different countries all day and all night. You share your meal. You share the duties, and you spend spare times together. It is not like you meet people, talk for 2 or 3 hours and then go back to your hotel. That's why these projects are comparatively much better for foreign language practises." P4 also states that "actually this is how it works: when you are forced to do something, you learn. That is how these projects work. In projects, there are dozens of activities, and these activities let you cooperate with people from other countries, and you are pushed to speak and transfer the knowledge. Sometimes you meet and make new friends, and you feel that you can be close friends, so you want to communicate not just for the project but to have quality time."

#### **4.2. Motivational development**

The second research question aims to unearth the participants' views regarding the contribution of Erasmus+ to their motivation. All of the 10 participants developed or improved foreign language learning motivation.

Participants benefit from many opportunities of the projects such as travelling abroad, visiting new places, being in a different environment, meeting new people from different cultures, being involved in various activities and tasks, promoting their own culture and country and learning new cultures, tasting different flavours both literally and

metaphorically etc. These sets of actions trigger the desire to learn, as Baloto (1996) stated. Collaborative international teams are organized in each Youth Exchange Projects. In each activity and tasks, group discussion and collaboration are required. This situation encourages participants to be involved in the process and motivates them to learn.

P3 stated "I think all young people should be involved in such projects in order to gain self-confidence in foreign language skills and increase their language learning motivation." P6 expressed "These projects changed my opinion about the importance of English a lot. I realized that I am curious about cultures and languages. My perspective expanded, so my curiosity increased, which triggered my desire to learn more. I also understood that the more I practice, the better I can speak about myself and my country. Of course, the more curious I get about cultures and language, the more my desire to learn English goes up."

Similarly, P4 stated "the activities carried out in the beginning are called "ice breakers". They enable participants to get to know others, learn names, and to create a friendly atmosphere. That being the case, activities increase the motivation to speak and keep it so until the last day of the projects. It is not only the activities but also people around to you that motivate you. Imagine that you are in a project with 6 participants from 8 different countries each. You are in an organisation with almost 50 people, and each person is unique. You would definitely want to meet such amazing people. You would not like to spend your hours sleeping but talking to people and getting to know them. It is almost impossible to lose your motivation in such a project. The more motivation you have, the more enjoyable the projects get." P1 stated that "In projects, we generally carried out collaborative group works. In these events, there was a creative and comfortable environment where each participant conveyed his/her knowledge, made common decisions by talking together and influenced each other and taught something. This situation prompted me to participate in events and to communicate with other participants. Seeing that I could speak to young people from all over Europe more easily than I had thought made me more enthusiastic about the future. " P9 stated "Communicating with people from different countries also motivated me once again to improve my English to use it for leisure activities, such as meeting new people, sharing knowledge and getting to know new cultures etc."

Youth Exchange projects make language learners have high levels of motivation, and they try their best to learn English and keep their learning process more active. Their own free will of applying different learning strategies enhance the effectiveness of learning behaviour, as Dörnyei (2001) suggests. All the interviewees want to improve or keep their level of

English due to inherent satisfaction rather than for some external consequences. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), it is called intrinsic motivation, and according to Harmer (2007), many researchers came to the common conclusion that intrinsic motivation produces a better result than extrinsic motivation does.

#### **4.2.1. Contribution of youth exchanges' atmosphere to motivation**

Youth Exchange project is usually the first opportunity that most participants have to use their foreign language out of the classroom for the first time, and this results in as anxiety. However, Youth Exchange projects get rid of this anxiety in the most effective and fruitful manner.

P1 stated, "I was extremely excited before the project, the reason for this was that I had never had such experience before, and I thought I was inadequate." P3 stated, "The projects contributed to my speaking skills because I was constantly speaking English 24/7 for ten days. It helped me to overcome the fear of not being able to speak, and I have practised a lot." As the participants stated, most of the participants have speaking anxiety which may develop due to several reasons. However, thanks to Youth Exchange activities which are based on friendship, as Brian et al. (2009) stated, "Good" teaching takes place, and participants overcome their anxiety problems. P4 stated, "In projects, there are dozens of activities, and these activities let you cooperate with people from other countries, and you are pushed to speak and transfer the knowledge. Sometimes you meet and make new friends, and you feel that you can be close friends, so you want to communicate not just for the project but to have some leisure time. You feel that the whole environment turns into a multicultural friendship zone, where people share stories about their lives or tell jokes or sing songs. As a result, you want to be a part of it. You can not sit in a corner and wait for days to pass if you are in a Youth Exchange Project. If you do so, someone will definitely come and talk to you. Participants will spend extra energy to keep you in the games and activities. You will be the star of the project, and you will not sit in the corner but in the middle of the action. I think this is the most important part of youth Exchange projects, and this is how it helped me."

The transcribed and coded views of the participants revealed that the friendship gained during the YE projects allow excessive communication without fear of making mistakes to the participants as well as developing or improving their self-confidence. It is also found out that the more talkative and fluent the participants became, the more motivated they became.

These findings also support Krashen's "affective filter hypothesis". In his theory, Krashen (1988) stated that affect includes motivation, attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence. Krashen also argued that people acquire second languages as long as they are exposed to comprehensible input and their affective filter are low enough to allow the input "in".



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary objective of the research is to unearth Erasmus+ Key Action Mobility of Individuals Youth Exchange Projects' foreign language learning motivation effects and its contribution to participants' foreign language speaking fluency.

Analysis of the qualitative data showed that all (N=10) participants think that they either developed or improved their foreign language speaking fluency and all participants think that they either developed or improved their foreign language learning motivation.

In this chapter, the results presented in the findings chapter will be discussed in light of the studies mentioned in the literature chapter. Pedagogical implications, limitations of the present study and suggestions for further studies will be discussed in this chapter.

#### **5.1. Discussion of the findings**

One of the specific objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme is to promote foreign language learning and linguistic diversity (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2020). According to the Erasmus+ program guide (2020), the lack of language competences is one of the main barriers to participation in education, training and youth programmes. Various actions that are mentioned in the literature review of the research have been carried out to support the personal and professional development of young people.

Key Action 1- Mobility of the learners and staff is commonly well-known action which provides opportunities for higher institution students, professors as well as the staff of educational institutions. Due to being widely-known by academic staff, this action has been in the centre of numerous studies. For instance, Kayaoğlu (2016) carried out qualitative research and figured out that the majority of the Erasmus students confirmed that they improved their foreign language skills. The study of Kayaoğlu (2016) also mentioned that students figured out strictly focusing on form in students' previous formal education lessons prevented them from having fluency. The participants of Kayaoğlu's (2016) research confess that they discovered the value of focusing on meaning. The findings of Kayaoğlu's (2016) research is similar to the findings of this research. Other significant studies such as Özdemir (2019), Gürlek (2019), Mulcar (2019) and Fombana et al. (2013) studied the effects of studying abroad (SA) and his research revealed that Erasmus students developed their

foreign language proficiency. Even though the present study differs from the studies mentioned above as their target group took formal classes and formal education methods were carried out during their study in abroad and duration of Erasmus university student exchange and youth exchange show difference, both previous studies and the present study reveals that Erasmus projects provide learners social interaction and opportunity to practice.

## **5.2. Negative Comments on National Education System**

The research unearthed that 4 participants complained about the national education system and blamed it for their failure in foreign language speaking fluency.

Besides having several advantages and providing great opportunities to its participants, European Union projects create undoubtedly unique settings to compare and contrast participants' educational background and the education system they were parts of. While meeting different people from a different country and living together for a period of time, participants in the Youth Exchanges have enough time to talk about various topics including their lifestyles, countries and services provided by the government of their own country. One of the most common topics discussed among participants is the education system in their own country. Even if it's not discussed openly, participants compare and contrast other participants' speech, behaviour, foreign language skills and self- confidence etc. Participants self-evaluate their previous education opportunities, especially English classes and try to find reasons for lacking in English proficiency. P1, who is a teacher of English and noted his level of English as 4, claims that although he graduated from ELT department, he had mediocre ability to speak due to reasons such as not being able to practice speaking English during his education. He adds that the education system at the university had inefficient and inadequate English speaking lessons and lacked English speaking opportunities for communication.

Another point that is made by P1 is the artificiality of the speaking lessons. P1 says that speaking classes and activities carried out in our education system takes places in an artificial atmosphere that neither attracts nor motivates learners to improve or develop foreign language skills. He adds that he had never felt the necessity of speaking so much before. P6, whose level of English is 4, noted that in the first days of the project, she had a bit of timidity due to our education system, but the project reversed it and in fact, brought back self-confidence. P2, whose level of English is 3, mentioned that she realized that she was trained in a perfectionist education system, and this was not really necessary. She adds that the

perfectionist system prevented her from learning and that resulted in an unwillingness to learn English.

As deduced from the reports of the interviewees, authenticity in English speaking classes cannot be obtained, and there is an evident problem of over-correction in the national education system. According to Holley and King (1971), the instructor should allow the students to complete his/her statements without interruption, and the instructor should revise any incorrect student response by substituting with correct forms, but not by calling attention to errors in another way.

### **5.3. Personal development**

As Sabitha (2013) stated, learning a foreign language is an interactive and social process. 2 of the participants views Youth Exchange projects more fruitful than being a tourist as the social interaction is more intense. This interactions also help participants to overcome their personal.

P1 who noted himself as a shy person and stated that he has difficulty when meeting with someone. He expressed that he did not try hard to be involved in the activities; however, other participants, atmosphere and the activities were quite charming, so he found himself in the middle of the action. In his first project, P4 thought that lacking English language proficiency would set a considerable barrier to be involved in the project and meeting with other participants. However, P4 stated that nobody could sit in a corner and wait the days to pass if s/he is in a youth Exchange Project. If you do so, someone will definitely come and talk to you. Participants will spend extra energy to keep you in the games and activities. You will be the star of the Project, and you will not sit in the corner but in the middle of the action. I think this is the most critical part of youth Exchange projects, and this is how it helped me. If I was a tourist in another country, nobody would try that hard to get to know me. "

### **5.4. Follow up activities carried out after the projects**

Erasmus+ Youth Exchange projects contribute a lot to personal developments of the participants and provide international identity to institutions. The research has found out that Youth Exchange projects, while creating an opportunity for their participants to spend a short period in an international atmosphere and practice a foreign language in the meantime, develops intrinsic motivation on their participants.

7 of participants stated that they carry out several activities to keep their learning process alive that is what Ryan and Deci (2000) calls intrinsic motivation and according to Harmer (2007) intrinsic motivation produces better results for learners.

Youth Exchange projects enable participants to self-evaluate their foreign language level. The friendship and atmosphere must spur intrinsic motivation and participants who feel that they need to improve their knowledge and level and try to be involved in other projects or create as many opportunities as possible to keep learning process alive.

P3 says that she tries to be involved in these activities again. She gathered up her colleagues to write EU projects for the school she works at, and she adds that all young people should be involved in such projects in order to gain self-confidence in foreign language skills and increase their language learning motivation. She develops intrinsic motivation, and she not only wants to be part of it but also tries to create opportunities for her colleagues and students. P4 noted his level of English as mediocre but also added that due to lack of vocabulary he was not able to communicate or introduce himself, but even with that level, he says he still kept chatting with his friends online. The participant watches movies with subtitles, and even when he is free, he tries to have some conversations in his mind by creating a situation. P10, who noted his level of English as 4, states that the participant tries some online applications, such as Skype, to keep in touch with his friends from the project and to maintain his level of fluency. The participant also watches Netflix movies with subtitles, even sometimes without subtitle, to practice listening and to learn the pronunciation of the new words.

This comments of P4 and P10 clearly reveals that they have become "Good learner", fitting to the description of Rubin and Thompson (1982). They are willing to practice as often as possible and try to get a message across even if specific language knowledge is lacking. P5 who was afraid of making mistakes, saying something wrong figured out with the projects that he needed to practice more to keep his English alive and so he says he had a Europe tour, visited eight countries and last summer, in 2019, he visited Thailand. The participant adds that although it is not the same as being in a project, he always tries to find some opportunities to practise English and tries to keep it alive. Another interviewee, P7, who also noted his level of English as 3 says that after this project, with the excitement of seeing a different country and different cultures, the participant is planning to become a pilot in order to make this excitement permanent. He is working to bring himself to a level of English

sufficient for this profession. The participant attends to language courses at a Private English Language Teaching institution and takes pilot training courses to become a pilot.

The ambition of P7 and confession of P5 about not being scared of making a grammatical mistake while speaking show that the participants also became "Good learners" as described by Rubin and Thompson (1982) and they both acquired intrinsic motivation toward learning English.

### **5.5. Educational Equality**

Due to mobility opportunities provided by Erasmus+ Youth Exchange projects, participants, as individuals or as a group, are expected to travel abroad to be involved in the projects. As Youth Exchanges allow participation of the individuals who are aged from 13 to 30 except for youth leaders of each group (Age limit is not applied for youth leaders), many participants do not have enough income to support such travels on their own. However, YE projects provide financial support for its participants, and this not only leads to educational equality but also provides the chance to go on an abroad trip for the first time. 2 participants (P1 and P10) stated that they would not travel and meet with so many people when they were university student with a limited budget.

Being provided that opportunity and immense excitement about travelling and using foreign language out-of-classroom motivates participants to be more involved in and eager to cooperate in the projects. Besides, those mobilities create self-confidence to develop teamwork skills of the participants as participants travel abroad together most of the time, and they need to act as one group who are presenting and representing their country. The teams even start before the mobility. The team needs to have brain-storms and discussion about their travel route, travel time and other procedures such as passports, visa application if required, personal items to be carried and cultural elements and presentations for the intercultural nights.

### **5.6. Implementation advise for Other Activities and Programs**

Another effect of Youth Exchanges on participants is improving the participants' creativity. Many participants are not used to being involved in Non-Formal Education (NFE) activities, which enable social interaction and self-discovery. Unlike formal education, participants are active and seen as discoverers rather than learners. Before and during NFE activities, participants need to evaluate the requirements of the activity. As an individual or a team, multiple intelligence types create a different perspective that results in the creation of various

ways to approach the same question or problem. By these methods and activities, participants observe other participants' ways of thinking, evaluate them as well as theirs, which fosters creativity.

It is clearly visible from the present research that Non-Formal Education methods fosters the learning process and improves learners' motivation. As a foreign language lesson, English lessons can follow NFE methods and include integrative activities which aim for practical use of the language rather than seeking to teach the language. This idea of the researcher is supported by La Belle (1982), who developed the concept of NFE and mentioned that NFE could take part in schools as extra-curricular activities. The inclusion of non-formal education is suggested to increase the teaching effectiveness (Bean,1996; Nilson, 2003). Therefore, the researcher advises teachers of English that follows formal curriculum to implement NFE activities as much as they can to foster the learning process.

Another implementation advise of the researcher is for the E-twinning platform. E-twinning is an online platform for staff (teachers, librarians etc.) working in a school in one of the EU countries involved, to communicate, collaborate, develop projects, share and be part of the most exciting learning community in Europe ([www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm](http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm)). E-twinning is co-funded by Erasmus+. These Online platform projects such as E-twinning are encouraged by the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Education as well. Etwinning provides a platform for school staff to communicate, collaborate, develop and implement projects. E-twinning is co-funded by Erasmus+. Etwinning does not involve mobility. Schools staff share their ideas and create a group to implement the project. Later, willing students are involved in the projects. Each school follows the project's steps, applies it at their schools and shares the images or videos about the project on the E-twinning platform. These projects can be quite beneficial for the schools and the students who do not have the opportunity to join a Youth Exchange project to boost their language motivation and development. However, Projects carried out within the E-twinning platform does not often include the cooperation of international students. Students carry out the projects with their school friends, and they are not expected to compare the activities on similar projects carried out in other schools. If E-twinning platform provides international cooperation and collaboration not only with school staff but also with the students, it can be regarded as a more effective program that constructs relationships among global learners as Brian (2009) stated. By involving interaction and friendship, E-twinning can foster the learning process better in every aspect.

## 5.7. Conclusion

The initial objective of the research is to unearth Erasmus+ Key Action Mobility of Individuals Youth Exchange Projects' foreign language learning motivation effects and its contribution to participants' foreign language speaking fluency.

In this respect, the present study asked the following research questions;

1. What are the participants' views regarding the contribution of EU Erasmus+ Youth Exchange Projects to their English speaking skills?
2. What are the participants' views regarding the contribution of EU Erasmus+ Youth Exchange Projects to their English learning motivation?

By utilizing qualitative research method, the study used open-ended structured interviews ( see Appendix A) for data collection. The research utilizes purposive sampling method. The data were analyzed qualitatively through MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software and inductive coding method was carried out. After reading the data in detail, the researcher created the codes below to unearth answers to research questions;

1. Level of Foreign Language
2. Motivational development
3. Fluency development
4. Opportunity to practice
5. Comments on previous fluency
6. Negative comments on Turkish Education System
7. Educational equality provided by Erasmus + projects
8. Follow-up activities carried out after projects

In addition, the research took advantage of in-depth analysis and expert opinion for the validity and reliability.

Analysis of the qualitative data showed that all (N=10) participants either developed or improved their foreign language speaking fluency and all participants either developed or improved their foreign language learning motivation.

Both the present research and other significant researches in the field (e.g., Kalocsai, 2009; Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014; Köylü 2016, Özdemir, 2019) revealed that Erasmus+ Exchange programs contribute to various types of linguistic developments. The idea of implementing a Youth Exchange (YE) Project is a unique way to gather such a multi-national peer group

of young people under a roof. These key actions are carried out to create a partnership among international institutions. These institutions include Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), a social enterprise, a public body at a local level, a group of active, young people that are called 'an informal group'. This institutional variety contributes to social and intercultural diversity of YE projects by involving 16 to 60 young people in each project (Erasmus+ Programme guide, 2020, p80).

This key action of Erasmus+ KA1 Learning Mobility of Individuals has become a shaping factor in the current structure of the Erasmus+ Programme. It has an immense and long-lasting contribution to participants' social and academic life. Besides social and educational benefits and gains, YE projects have had a vast contribution to the recognition and promotion of foreign languages in harmony with the aims of the European Commission (2009). This outcome also meets the desires of the European Commission (2019) to observe foreign language as a critical factor in education, training and youth programmes.

All in all, Erasmus+ programme, besides many social and academic contributions, helps its beneficiaries improve their foreign language speaking fluency and triggers their motivation to learn foreign languages by setting an authentic atmosphere to practice, aiming to achieve specific tasks while respecting cultural and social diversity, integrating participants by applying non-formal education methods, creating an opportunity for financially disadvantaged young people through the provision of funds, facilitation of visa procedures and promotion of social inclusion.

### **5.8. Limitations and suggestions for further research**

There are several limitations. First of all, the number of the participants in the present research was limited to 10 and only qualitative research method was carried out. Even though qualitative research was the most appropriate design considering the purpose of the study, the findings can not be generalized and further research conducted with more participants and backed up by quantitative or mixed research methods may reveal more detailed insight into the Youth Exchange projects.

Secondly, the present study did not take into account some external demographic factors such as age, gender and GPA, and so on. A further study comparing such factors might bring a deeper perspective and explanations as such factors can be important determinants of both foreign language learning motivation and proficiency. Another limitation of the research is the duration changes of the projects that participants had been involved. As the

projects are carried out in an informal fashion, the duration of the projects vary from 5 to 21 days which definitely will bring out individual differences including motivation, attitude and interaction.

Last but not least, the current study has not got the opportunity to analyze the views of participants before they take part in the project. Pre-test and post-test applied studies may reveal deeper perspective to the literature considering longitudinal changes.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Interview Questions

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Dear participant, the interview questions you will answer will help Koray CANTEZ, who is a master student at Sakarya University, Institute of Educational Sciences, Department of English Language Education and will be shared in the fields related to his thesis. I remind you that the interview questions are based on volunteerism. I hope that you answer them sincerely. Thank you in advance.

Koray CANTEZ

- a. How old are you?
  - b. What is your educational status?
1. If you evaluate your English speaking skills between 1 and 5, how many points would you give? ( 1= lowest 5= highest)
  2. In which year (s) and in which country (s) did you participate in the European Union Youth Exchange program? Which countries were there as participants?
  3. How long did the Project last?
  4. Do you think the Project has improved or contributed to your English speaking skills? Please explain why.
  5. How did the projects you participated in effect your motivation to speak English? Please provide your opinions.
  6. Did you have any difficulty in speaking English in the first days of the Project? If yes, what do you think was the reason for this difficulty, was there a lack of vocabulary, grammar knowledge or other factors?
  7. Did you think that your foreign language level was insufficient while communicating during the projects? What is the reason that makes you think so? Please give an example.
  8. If you compare the first and last days of the projects, do you think you have gained fluency in speaking English? How did you come to this opinion?
  9. Have you changed your opinion about the importance of English when you compare before and after the Project?
  10. Is there anything you would like to mention besides the questions addressed to you?

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