



## Evaluation of an Optional English Preparatory Program with CIPP Scale\*

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### Abstract

The quality of English language education in universities is vital in preparing individuals for the increasingly globalized world. Assessing the efficacy of English teaching programs is therefore crucial to ensuring such quality. Consequently, this study aims to evaluate the optional English preparatory program of a state university using the CIPP model dimensions: context, input, process, and product. The current study employs a mixed-methods research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to address the research questions. The study sample comprised 247 preparatory graduate and 77 preparatory students, as well as 6 lecturers. In the quantitative part, The CIPP scale (Context, Input, Process, and Product), developed by the researchers based on item analysis, second-order exploratory factor analysis, reliability analysis, criterion validity, and content validity, was used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the English preparatory program based on responses of participants to the items in four dimensions of the scale. The qualitative aspect of the study involved obtaining responses from participant students through open-ended questions and conducting semi-structured interviews with lecturers. These responses were analyzed, and the resulting excerpts were used to support and complement the findings obtained from the quantitative findings. The results indicate that the participants were highly satisfied with the optional nature of the program and held positive perceptions of it. However, some improvements, particularly in the physical conditions of the program's context dimension, such as the library, laboratory, and school building, were required. The findings from the input and process dimensions reveal the importance of increasing target language use and prioritization of speaking skills in the product dimension. The developed CIPP scale, which is statistically reliable and valid, can be utilized by researchers to evaluate English preparatory programs using the CIPP model. The study concludes by offering several key recommendations for creating a more effective English preparatory program based on the findings.

## İsteğe Bağlı Bir İngilizce Hazırlık Programının CIPP Ölçeği ile Değerlendirilmesi

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### Öz

Üniversitelerdeki İngilizce dil eğitiminin kalitesi, bireyleri giderek küreselleşen dünyaya hazırlamada, hayati öneme sahiptir. Bu nedenle, İngilizce öğretim programlarının etkililiğini değerlendirmek, bu kaliteyi sağlamak açısından son derece önemlidir. Bu noktadan hareketle, mevcut çalışma, bir devlet üniversitesinin isteğe bağlı İngilizce hazırlık programını CIPP modeli boyutları: bağlam, girdi, süreç ve ürün kullanarak değerlendirmeyi amaçlamıştır. Çalışmada, araştırma sorularını cevaplandırmak için nicel ve nitel verileri birleştiren karma yöntem bir araştırma tasarımı kullanılmıştır. Çalışma örneklemi, 247 hazırlık mezunu ve 77 hazırlık öğrencisi ile 6 öğretim görevlisinden

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:**

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CIPP Modeli,  
CIPP Ölçeği.

**Araştırma Makalesi**

oluşmaktadır. Nicel boyutta, araştırmacılar tarafından madde analizi, ikinci derece keşifsel faktör analizi, güvenilirlik analizi, ölçüt geçerliliği ve içerik geçerliliği temel alınarak geliştirilen CIPP ölçeği (Bağlam, Girdi, Süreç ve Ürün), ölçeğin dört boyutundaki maddelere katılımcıların yanıtlarına dayanarak, İngilizce hazırlık programının güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini belirlemek için kullanıldı. Çalışmanın nitel boyutunda, katılımcı öğrencilerden açık uçlu sorularla yanıtlar alındı ve öğretim görevlileriyle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirildi. Bu yanıtlar analiz edilerek, nicel bulguları desteklemek ve tamamlamak için kullanıldı. Bulgular, katılımcıların programın isteğe bağlı doğasından oldukça memnun olduklarını ve programın bu yönüne olumlu algılar beslediklerini göstermektedir. Ancak, programın bağlam boyutu, özellikle kütüphane, laboratuvar ve okul binası gibi fiziksel koşullarda bazı iyileştirmeler gerektiğine işaret etmektedir. Girdi ve süreç boyutlarından elde edilen bulgular, hedef dil kullanımını artırmanın ve ürün boyutunda konuşma becerilerine öncelik vermenin önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında geliştirilen ve istatistiksel olarak güvenilirliği ve geçerliliği ortaya konulan CIPP ölçeğinin, araştırmacılar tarafından İngilizce hazırlık programlarını CIPP modelini kullanarak değerlendirmek için kullanılabilir. Çalışma, bulgulardan yola çıkılarak etkili bir İngilizce hazırlık programı oluşturmak için birkaç önemli öneri ile sonuçlandırılmıştır.

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## Introduction

Since English has become the primary language for international communication, learning and teaching English as a foreign language has become increasingly essential all over the world. According to Seidlhofer (2005), the majority of English speakers are non-native speakers of the language. The project by the University of Winnipeg (2021) also supports this issue stating that English education is compulsory in 142 countries and is elective in 41 countries. Raising generations of English-speaking citizens in a developing country like Türkiye can make a substantial contribution to the country's economic and cultural development. Apart from education at K-12 levels, Turkish universities have a mission of teaching English as a foreign language. This education is either compulsory or optional. For both scenarios, assessing the programs is crucial for effectively teaching English to higher education students.

### Program Evaluation

Any system, for its effective functioning, necessitates some form of validation process. Evaluation can be perceived as a strategic roadmap, providing decision-makers with substantial guidance and direction. Without such controls in place, even the most meticulously crafted programs cannot guarantee their alignment with the pre-determined goals and objectives. Therefore, these checks are crucial in ensuring the successful implementation and execution of the program. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation briefly defined evaluation as “the systematic assessment of the worth or merit of some object” (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 1985, p. 3). An educational program, on the other hand, is defined as “a series of courses linked with some common goal or end product” (Lynch, 1997, p. 2). Lastly, a program evaluation can be defined as systematically gathering information to make judgments about the program (Lynch, 1997), promoting the improvement of the program (Brown, 1995), and investigating the effectiveness of these programs (Rossi et al., 2004). In this context, an education program is a system that must be evaluated to understand whether the system works properly. In relation to the subject of the current study, the Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics defines the language program evaluation as follows: “evaluation is related to decisions about the quality of the program itself and decisions about individuals in the programs. The evaluation of programs may involve the study of curriculum, objectives, materials, and tests or grading systems” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 206). In accordance with this definition and its perspective, the current study addresses every dimension of the language program in question.

### Relevant Literature on Language Program Evaluation

Language education is an ever-evolving field that requires continual refinement, making the significance of evaluation studies undeniable. This stance is further substantiated by a wealth of academic research. For instance, the results of the study conducted by Kiely (2000) to evaluate an EAP program at a British university showed that students and teachers had different program constructs. Chen (2009)

investigated 20 English training courses in Taiwan using the CIPP model and demonstrated that the courses were functioning well, yet there was space for improvement in meeting students' needs, course content, teaching methodology, and assessment.

Some other studies showed that productive skills need to be emphasized more during the course of language education (Alizadeh, 2018; Esgaiar, 2019; Yousif, 2017). Similarly, in the Turkish context, Arap (2016), Erdođan (2020), Kuzu (2020), and zdođru (2017) utilized the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, and Product) to evaluate English preparatory programs and they all concluded that speaking skill should be given more emphasis. Efeođlu et al. (2018) conducted two evaluation studies for successive two years using the Utilization-Focused model. With the precautions taken, the researchers believed that the difficulties raised by students concerning the courses in the first evaluation were substantially eliminated in the second evaluation. Cengiz (2019), adopted a qualitative approach and used a logic model to evaluate a preparatory program in its first year and suggested re-organizing the materials according to proficiency exam, being more careful about plagiarism in portfolio assignments and some pieces of training for content classes to improve the program. Karcı Aktař and Gndođdu (2020) utilized Bellon and Handler's model. Their findings revealed that, despite their eagerness to study English, the students were unable to acquire the desired level. Instructors and students from other departments supported this, claiming that students struggled to understand English classes and lacked professional English skills.

### **CIPP Program Evaluation Model**

As proposed by Patton (2002), the potentially overwhelming task of conducting an evaluation can be efficiently managed through the use of evaluation models. These models serve as a roadmap for evaluators, offering clear and structured guidance on the successive steps to be undertaken. In line with the purposes of this study, Daniel L. Stufflebeam's CIPP (1983) (context, input, process, and product) model, which is said to fit educational program evaluations and is widely used in the literature, was utilized. The context of a program, an institution, or a population is identified in context evaluation, as the name implies. *Context evaluation* entails determining a program's objectives, strengths, limitations, and, most significantly, needs (Stufflebeam, 1983). The major goal of the *input evaluation* is to determine whether a proposed intervention is worthwhile to implement without failing or squandering resources. This stage identifies system capabilities such as barriers, restrictions, and accessible resources. Following that, an evaluator can assess the current program in light of its needs and objectives. The major goal of the *process dimension* of this evaluation approach is to see if a plan is being carried out as planned and to what extent it is being implemented (Stufflebeam, 1983). This is a continuous procedure that will be checked on a regular basis. It's looking for answers to the query, "Is it being done?" (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 65). The goal of the last dimension of the CIPP model, *product evaluation*, is to measure, understand, and judge what is being accomplished and what has been accomplished throughout and after the program (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014). The assessor attempts to respond to the question, "Did the project succeed?" (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 66).

Most of the aforementioned studies on language program evaluation have focused on compulsory English preparatory programs. However, the current study attempted to evaluate an optional English preparatory program, designed for students who voluntarily choose to undergo an intensive one-year English study. The principal objective of the evaluation is to understand the effectiveness of the program's individual components and overall delivery process. Subsequently, it also aims to identify areas for enhancement and propose viable solutions to improve the program's efficacy.

Since its foundation, the optional English preparatory program at Bilecik řeyh Edebalı University, a state university in Trkiye, has not undergone any evaluation process. Although meetings at the end of each term and year have resulted in essential modifications and improvements, these changes and improvements have not been based on a systematic evaluation process. To be effective, evaluations must be based on solid evidence and a good assessment methodology; otherwise, efforts to enhance the program through such meetings risk leaving its effectiveness to chance.

In line with these aims, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perspectives of prep-graduates and students in terms of context, input, process, and product of the existing optional English preparatory program?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program from the perspectives of prep-graduates, current students, and instructors?
3. What are the positive and negative aspects of the English preparatory program being optional from the perspectives of prep-graduates, current students, and instructors?

### **Method**

The current study used qualitative and quantitative approaches in data collection and analysis to evaluate Bilecik Őeyh Edebalı University's optional English preparatory program utilizing Stufflebeam's CIPP model. A mixed-method research approach combines quantitative and qualitative data to portray the study problem in a more comprehensive way (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The mixed methods research method was chosen for this study to achieve complementarity by guaranteeing that the quantitative and qualitative data outputs feed and enhance each other (Greene et al., 1989).

### **Participants**

Graduates of preparatory school, current students, and instructors were the study's universe. Convenient sampling was utilized to determine study participants. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, right to withdraw, and confidentiality of the data were taken into account and ethical committee approval to conduct the current study was also taken. In the preceding years (2017-2021), graduate students received a one-year English education before beginning their majors. Students from the first year of the preparatory program (2016-2017) were omitted from the study since they had not only graduated from university, but the preparatory program's curriculum had also changed dramatically at the time. As a result, the CIPP evaluation scale was distributed to 667 graduates, and 247 of them (male= 137; female= 110; average age: 21.5) responded. 118 students were officially registered for the current academic year, which is the 2021-2022 academic year. However, 11 students did not attend the lessons, bringing the total number of students to 107. It was intended to reach the entire preparatory school population. The CIPP evaluation scale, on the other hand, received 77 (male= 47; female= 30; average age: 19.6) responses. The main reason for this was the fluctuating frequency of Covid 19 instances at the school. There were a total of 9 instructors teaching in the optional English preparatory program, and six of them (two males and four females) participated in the semi-structured interviews.

### **Setting**

The study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages of Bilecik Őeyh Edebalı University in the 2021-2022 academic year. The English preparatory curriculum is entirely optional because English is not the instruction language in any of the university's departments. Students who want to enroll in the English preparatory program indicate this when they register for university. Students are put in A1, A2, or B1 levels based on the results of the placement test taken during the first week of school. The level titles are based on the CEFR (Common European Framework of References for Languages) levels (Council of Europe, 2020), and the textbooks used in the curriculum correspond to the CEFR levels. Students are in the same class all year; however, their textbooks change as their level advances. Throughout an academic year, the preparatory program is implemented for a total of 28 weeks, 14 weeks in each semester. The courses are 60 percent face-to-face and 40 percent online in the 2021-2022 academic year due to the pandemic. The total weekly course hours, both online and face-to-face, are 22 hours. All classes are taught as part of the main course, and a lesson plan is applied in which four skills, grammar, and vocabulary are integrated. As for the evaluation criteria, students need to take 4 quizzes, 4 midterms, and a final exam. Also, they need to submit speaking and writing portfolios each semester. A student must score at least 60 on the final exam and have a grade point average of 60 or higher out of 100 to be successful.

### **Data Collection Tools and Data Analysis**

*The CIPP English Preparatory Program Evaluation Scale* was developed by the researchers based on a comprehensive review of the literature and the needs and objectives of the program. It was a 5-point scale consisting of 62 items under 4 components of the CIPP model, namely context, input, process, and product. The researchers grouped the items with the opinions of experts from the fields of ELT and Curriculum and Instruction. In the item analysis of the scale, second-order exploratory factor analysis (Ogasawara, 2002), reliability analysis based on internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha), and criterion validity steps were followed. For content validity, the items included in the scale were examined for expression, intelligibility, language, and content by 2 experts with a Ph.D. in English Language Education, and the items in the scale were finalized.

*The following open-ended questions* were asked at the end of the scale to get more detailed information:

1. What are the positive and negative aspects of the English preparatory program being optional?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program? Please explain.
3. Are there any other comments you would like to express about the optional English preparatory program? Please explain.

*Interviews* were used in this evaluation study. The interview questions were developed in accordance with the study's objectives following a thorough examination of the literature (Clark & Creswell, 2014; Hatch, 2002) and the interview protocol was developed with the help of two researchers from the field of ELT and Curriculum and Instruction. To show the weak and strong sides of the program, we adopted choosing the two items rated the lowest and the highest in the CIPP evaluation scale despite no significant differences between the items. To give a general framework, the results were derived from the responses of all CIPP scale participants, namely prep-graduates and current students. In addition, open-ended questions and interviews were other sources of information for this question.

In conclusion, the study employed a mixed-method approach, which encompassed both qualitative and quantitative components. The quantitative portion of the study involved the analysis of the highest and lowest means in the developed CIPP scale items and their dimension, as rated by participants on a five-point Likert scale. This provided valuable insight into the overall trends and patterns in the data, highlighting areas of strength and weakness within the sample population. The qualitative component of the study, on the other hand, was designed to elicit more in-depth and nuanced responses from participants. Open-ended questions and interviews were utilized to gather rich and detailed data on participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes related to the research topic. This qualitative data was then used to support and complement the findings obtained from the quantitative analysis of the scale, thereby increasing the overall robustness and validity of the study results. By combining these two research methods, the study was able to provide a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the research topic. The quantitative data allowed for a broad overview of the topic, while the qualitative data provided a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Overall, with the use of a mixed method approach and triangulation of these different forms of data, the study was able to paint a more complete and accurate picture of the research topic and draw more robust and reliable conclusions based on the findings.

### **Procedure**

Upon obtaining the necessary permissions from the relevant authorities, the research team proceeded to collect data from the target participants. To reach out to prep graduates, the questionnaire was disseminated through the school's online text message system, which proved to be an effective and efficient means of communication. The same online method was employed to solicit responses from current students, ensuring that the data collected from both groups were comparable.

In addition to the questionnaire, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with instructors to gain their valuable perspectives and insights on the research topic. To accommodate the busy schedules of the instructors, the interviews were held either online using the Zoom application or in the instructor's office, whichever was more convenient. The interview protocol was sent to the instructors beforehand via email, giving them ample time to prepare and gather their thoughts. This ensured that the interviews were focused, and productive, and generated valuable data that could be used to further enhance the research findings.

Overall, the research team adopted a multi-pronged approach to data collection, which included a combination of questionnaires and one-on-one interviews with different participant groups. By leveraging the school's online messaging system and Zoom application, the team was able to collect data in a timely and efficient manner, while also ensuring that the participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected throughout the process.

### Findings

#### Reliability and Validity of the Scale

##### Item Analysis

Item analysis was conducted on the top and bottom 27% groups before performing factor analysis, to verify data reliability and validity, and assess the efficacy of test items in measuring the targeted construct. The t-test was used in the item analysis to compare the performance of the two groups on each test item. Additionally, the item-total score correlations were calculated to assess the relationship between each item and the total test score. These correlations ranged from 0.86 to 0.96, indicating a strong positive relationship between the items and the construct being measured (Field, 2013).

Based on the results of the item analysis (Table 1), it was concluded that the test items had high discrimination levels and were effective in measuring the construct of interest. As a result, all of the items were deemed suitable for inclusion in the factor analysis. This finding provides confidence in the accuracy of the factor analysis results and reinforces the validity and reliability of the data used in the study. In conclusion, conducting an item analysis study prior to factor analysis is a critical step in ensuring the validity and reliability of the data. The results of this study provided evidence that the test items were effective in measuring the construct of interest and could be included in the factor analysis. This thorough analysis strengthens the credibility of the research findings.

**Table 1.**  
*Results of Item Analysis*

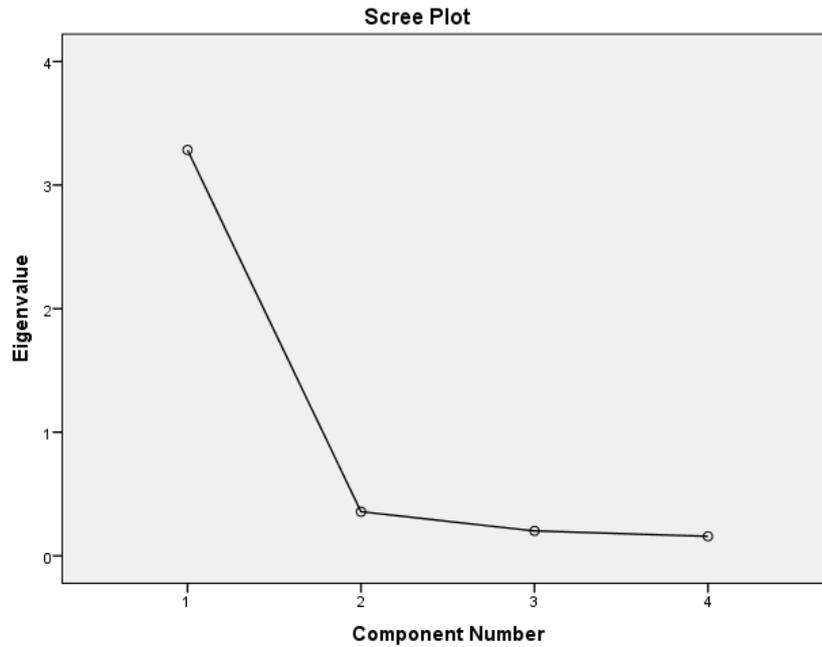
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T
<b>Context</b>	Female	74	46.3108	15.09234	-11.545*
	Male	44	72.8182	2.38476	
<b>Input</b>	Female	74	39.4865	13.42482	-9.641*
	Male	44	59.1136	1.60255	
<b>Process</b>	Female	74	72.8649	22.85291	-12.885*
	Male	44	117.5682	3.05300	
<b>Product</b>	Female	74	31.4730	11.58320	-12.681*
	Male	44	53.9091	2.29071	

\* $p < 0.01$

### Factor Structure of the Developed Scale

Results of Second Order Exploratory Factor Analysis: To examine the factor structure of the CIPP English Preparatory Program Evaluation Scale, factor analysis based on Principal Components Analysis was performed on the student participants. In this context, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient was examined and the Barlett test value was determined. To carry out the factor structure study from the data, the KMO value should be higher than 60, and Barlett's test should be significant (Büyüköztürk, 2011). Accordingly, the KMO value was .855 ( $p < .01$ ) and Barlett's Test of Sphericity Chi-Square value was 802.793 ( $p < .01$ ). These results show that the sample size is good and sufficient for factor analysis (depending on the KMO value) and the sample meets the multivariate normality assumption (depending on the Barlett test results).

Based on the assumption that the factors could be related to each other in the study, the Varimax Vertical Rotation technique, one of the rotation techniques, was used in the exploratory factor analysis. At the beginning of the analysis, there were no items with factor loading values below .30 and at the same time entering more than one factor. As a result, the analysis continued with a total of 4 dimensions, and a one-dimensional scale was reached. According to the result of the second-order factor analysis, a scale with an eigenvalue of 3.28 and a total variance of 82.10% was obtained. According to the results of the analysis, the factor loading values of the items included in the scale vary between .85 and .93 (Dimensions and their respective Factor loading: process - .93, input - .92, context - .91, product - .85).



*Figure 1. Scatter Diagram*

### Reliability of the CIPP English Preparatory Program Evaluation Scale

The analysis revealed that Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the Scale was .896, indicating a high level of reliability of the instrument (Çokluk et al., 2010). This means that the Scale is consistent in measuring the construct of interest and can be considered a dependable tool for evaluating the English Preparatory Program. The high-reliability coefficient suggests that the items on the Scale are interrelated and measure the same construct consistently and accurately. This finding reinforces the credibility and validity of the results of the English Preparatory Program Evaluation. A highly reliable Scale indicates that the research instrument is consistent in measuring the construct of interest, which strengthens the confidence in the study's findings. In conclusion, Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency technique was utilized to assess the

reliability of the CIPP English Preparatory Program Evaluation Scale. The high-reliability coefficient of .896 indicates that the Scale is a dependable tool for evaluating the program and that the items on the Scale measure the same construct consistently and accurately. This finding reinforces the credibility and validity of the evaluation results and provides a consistent and reliable tool for future assessments of the program's effectiveness.

***Research question 1: What are the perspectives of prep-graduates and students in terms of context, input, process, and product of the existing English preparatory program?***

#### **Context Evaluation**

In the context dimension, prep-graduates agreed that the program was up-to-date, and the objectives of the program were clear and appropriate for their level. When the lowest items (item 11 -  $\bar{x}$ = 3.05; item 12-  $\bar{x}$ = 3.2, and item 14-  $\bar{x}$ = 3.74) were examined, it was evident that students were dissatisfied with the program's facilities, such as the computer laboratories, library, and building. Current students also strongly agreed on this issue. Another point that was underlined by students was that the majority believed English was necessary for their majors.

#### **Input Evaluation**

In the input evaluation, instructors seemed to have a positive impact on students (item 9-  $\bar{x}$ = 4.31, item 10-  $\bar{x}$ = 4.43). Both prep-grads and students believed that the instructors have the necessary qualifications. Students also found grammar and vocabulary photocopyables and exercises helpful (item 5-  $\bar{x}$ = 4.22). Prep-graduates stated that textbooks were appropriate to their levels (item 2=  $\bar{x}$ = 4.30). Another point that stood out in the input dimension was the use of the target language by the instructors. Although most of the participants agreed that instructors mostly used English in class, they stated that it was not the whole time (item 11=  $\bar{x}$ = 3.79).

#### **Process Evaluation**

In the process dimension, prep-graduates and students were particularly pleased with the assessment process, which included the number of tests, themes covered in the exams, and grading systems (item 15-  $\bar{x}$ = 4.24; item 16-  $\bar{x}$ = 4.39; item 17-  $\bar{x}$ = 4.25; item 21-  $\bar{x}$ = 4.27; and item 22-  $\bar{x}$ = 4.28). Speaking proved to be the least focused of the language skills, despite the fact that it was not very low (item 6-  $\bar{x}$ = 4). Furthermore, more than half of the students claimed in item 12 ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.76) that the instructor's use of English increased their interest in the course; nevertheless, they also mentioned in item 13 ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.17) that they wanted the instructor to use Turkish in class to a limited amount. On the other hand, they also stated that they did not use English much in the classroom (item 11,  $\bar{x}$ = 3.41).

#### **Product Evaluation**

There was a modest decrease in product evaluation where the language skills obtained were evaluated when compared to the result of the process dimension. Although participants believed the program valued these skills, their perceptions were slightly lower. The skills did not differ significantly, but the speaking skill (item 6,  $\bar{x}$ = 3.07) was the lowest on the scale, followed by pronunciation (item 7=  $\bar{x}$ = 3.79). Students also believed that the program provided a basis for their future English studies.

***Research question 2: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program from the perspectives of prep-graduates, current students, and instructors?***

To show the weak and strong sides of the program, we adopted choosing the two items rated the lowest and the highest in the CIPP evaluation scale despite no significant differences between the items. To give a general framework, the results were derived from the responses of all CIPP scale participants, namely prep-graduates and current students. In addition, open-ended questions and interviews were other sources of information to this question.

In the context dimension, student participants believed that “the objectives of the English preparatory program are clear and understandable” (item 4) and “the preparation program is up-to-date” (item 8).

Instructors, on the other hand, were also satisfied with the extent to which the program achieved its aims and objectives. However, when they were asked what these aims and objectives were, their answers varied. These answers ranged from finishing the course book, completing all the units, teaching basic English skills, and training students for the international area to taking them from A1 level to B1 level.

Participants stated that there was a lack of an adequate computer lab and library for the use of prep students indicating the need for improvement in the context dimension. Also, in the qualitative part of the study, there were comments that the building and its facilities were inadequate. For example, a comment from prep-graduates was: *"I wish the building where the preparatory program was held was better."* Some instructors also supported this with their comments: *"Here is like the reception of the university, the first place a customer sees in a hotel. If your reception is bad, it does not matter whether your rooms are good."* (Instructor 4). *"They threw us in the corner. They didn't even paint those garden walls."* (Instructor 3).

In the input dimension, quantitative and qualitative data support each other. The results of the scale showed that instructors and textbooks were the strong parts of the program. Some of the prep-grads also stressed this issue: *"I think that the instructors in the program are well-qualified"* (Student- 7). *"I believe that the most powerful aspect of the preparatory program was the teaching staff"* (Student 28). Instructors were also of the same opinion: *"Its strength is that it has enthusiastic instructors. I think everyone teaches their lesson with love"* (Instructor 5), *"We never have to think about what we will do tomorrow. The book and its materials are a huge plus"* (Instructor 1). However, they complained that they could not have separate skills courses, spend enough time on communicative activities and arrange extra-curricular activities due to the low number of instructors.

Although current students were pleased with their instructors, they stated that having a native-speaker teacher would also add more to their learning. Graduate students had native-speaker teachers; therefore, they stated this issue both as a strength and a weakness. It was a strength because they benefited from them, especially in speaking; it was a weakness too because there were not enough teachers and class hours with them. As for the improvements in the input dimension, target language use could be increased by instructors although it was not very low (*"Instructors use(d) only English in the lesson"* mean= 3.87). Also, the variety of the materials could be increased as well as the results suggest.

In the process dimension of the evaluation, fairness of portfolio homework systems and fair scoring of the exams came to the front. Participants also thought that enough importance was attached to all language skills. However, they thought that more focus should be given to the speaking skill. Some students wrote: *"I think speaking lessons should be increased"* (Student 48), *"The importance given to speaking skills should be increased. No matter how much grammar the student learns, if he cannot put it into practice, he cannot even describe the address to a tourist. I know by myself"* ((Student 17). Another point that stood out in the results was item 11 which states *"I use(d) only English in the lessons"* with a mean of 3.29. Students also admitted that they do not use the target language much in class. In addition, they became more interested in the lesson when the instructor speaks English. The instructors also stated that more communication-oriented lessons are a need. Instructor 3 stated that *"The number of lessons is insufficient to improve students' communication skills. In addition, we focus more on measuring more mechanical things such as grammar and vocabulary in exams, and we put less emphasis on the measurement of communication skills."*

In the product dimension, the items with the lowest average are 6 and 4, respectively, indicating the need for improvement in the program's product component. "My speaking improved at the end of the preparatory program/until now" (item 6) and "My writing skills improved at the end of the program/until now" (item 4) are the items in question. In terms of these items, it can be concluded that the students felt the curriculum to be lacking, particularly in terms of speaking and writing abilities. This result is compatible with the results in the input and process dimensions. Therefore, more target language use will lead to better outcomes in productive skills. "The program provides a foundation for the future needs of the students" (item 11) and "My reading skills have improved at the end of the program" (item 3) were the

highest-rated items in this dimension, showing the success of the preparatory program in the product dimension.

**Research question 3: What are the positive and negative aspects of the English preparatory program being optional from the perspectives of prep-graduates, current students, and instructors?**

This open-ended question was answered by 175 of the 247 graduates. Based on the responses, it is obvious that an optional English preparatory program lessens students' stress by removing the burden of grades. Because it was their decision and the majority of prep grads indicated that completing an optional program had a favorable impact on them. During the prep year, some grads said they felt less anxious and more motivated. The following excerpt shows their positive feelings:

*"The fact that it was optional didn't stress me out too much. I focused more comfortably on the lessons and was willing to attend and participate in them. The absence of a failing prevented us from stressing"* (Student 68)

However, a few students reported that they lost motivation because the school was not mandatory, they simply gave up. In addition to losing motivation, a few students stated that the program's optionality caused them to be less serious about their studies and grades. One excerpt proves this idea:

*"If I had to talk about the effect it had on me, I left it loose because it was optional, and after a while, I was absent. If it was compulsory, I probably wouldn't leave myself so easily."* (Student 77)

On the other hand, other students suggested that English prep education be made mandatory since they believe that everyone should study English. Although it may still be voluntary, a student believes that people should be encouraged to study English for a variety of reasons:

*"First of all, I think prep. class should be mandatory because we can say that even one foreign language will be inadequate in the future. This is how I approach it."* (Student 16)

Another favorable feature mentioned by students was that they saw this year as an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the city, university, and surroundings in general. The majority of students stated that making decisions based on their preferences had a beneficial impact on them. A lot of students were pleased with their peers as well. They indicated that most students were enthusiastic to study since they decided to be there. Last but not least, some students indicated that the program's optionality did not affect them because all they wanted to do was to learn English. Seventy-two current students out of 77 stated similar thoughts on this issue, despite being less detailed. They also indicated that they are not under any pressure and are unconcerned about passing the program. Current students placed a greater emphasis on class cohesion and the pleasant process of learning a language. The following excerpts showcase this:

*"There are no people who sabotage the lesson or disrupt the harmony of the class because there are people who want to learn"* (Student 2).

*"Being optional took the negativity that would arise out of obligation. Only those who wanted to study came, now those who complain are the minority. Otherwise, it would be torture for both teachers and students"* (Student 18).

There were only a few students who commented on the disadvantages of learning in an optional English program. The following excerpts showcase the disadvantages:

*"On the positive side, I feel free. Negative aspects, I feel very comfortable about studying because I feel free"* (Student 48).

*"The absence of passing anxiety in students does not attract the desire of the student to study ..."* (Student 12).

Compared to students, instructors were less positive about the program's optionality. According to the majority of them, students have trouble attending classes and studying and are overly comfortable,

because they could continue their major even if they failed in prep school. It soon became a problem for their motivation, the motivation of the class, and the teachers. The following excerpt showcases this:

*“It is both a blessing and a curse. If it was compulsory, there would be students who came to hate simply because they had to. Although the optional nature of the program may seem like a blessing, our students are also so comfortable that they say “What if I pass, what if I fail, it does not affect my life”. This time it turns into a curse for us. They are too comfortable. Stress is not a good thing, but a little stress is needed”* (Instructor 5).

An instructor talked about his changing views on this issue as follows:

*“I used to think it was good. I was saying that wow, even though it was optional, so many students came. But now I don't think so. They don't even come to class. I'm telling and explaining that much, then he comes and asks if there is a roll call. He doesn't even study for the exam. If it was compulsory, he would have to study, he would come to class”* (Instructor 3).

Some of them stated that it is positive to have an optional program because it does not affect their future at university; they can start their department whatever the result of the prep school is. The following excerpts show these views:

*“Positively, at least there is a stress-free environment. Even if they really do let it go, what happens? Nothing would happen”* (Instructor 4).

*“Absolutely positive. They have nothing to lose”* (Instructor 6).

### Discussion

A comprehensive evaluation of the optional English preparatory program is the central focus of the current study. This evaluation is organized around four key dimensions of the CIPP model: context, input, process, and product. We explore the nuances of the program from both students' and instructors' perspectives. These dimensions shed light on the program's objectives, instructional resources, teaching process, and overall outcomes in students' skill development. In addition, we pay special attention to the unique factors arising from the program's voluntary nature. By bringing together these different insights, we aim to provide a clear and thorough understanding of the program's functioning and effectiveness.

*Context Evaluation:* The aims and objectives of a program, as well as its environment, were taken into account during the context evaluation. Regarding the items related to the program's aims, it's evident that the objectives are appropriate for the students' level. These were some of the items with the highest averages. The clarity and compatibility of the program objectives were praised by both students and instructors. However, regarding the objectives, instructors' responses varied to some extent. Some other studies reveal a lack of clarity on the program objectives (Cengiz, 2019; zkanal, 2009; Uysal, 2019).

The physical conditions of the institution were another issue that stood out in the quantitative and qualitative data. These difficulties were listed as the general problems that universities had in Gkdemir's (2010) study. According to the findings, universities that provide English language courses are unable to provide acceptable learning environments and classroom conditions. In this study, items 10, 11, and 12 dealt with the school's facilities, classes, library, and computer lab, respectively. This issue arose in the open-ended questions and interviews as well. In the literature, the physical conditions of the buildings and facilities seem a common problem for most schools of foreign languages (zkanal, 2009; Pamukođlu, 2019; řakirođlu nsal & Kaya, 2017; řen, 2012; Tekin, 2015).

*Input Evaluation:* The most highly agreed item is 10 which states that the instructors in the English preparatory program have the qualifications and competence to fulfill the requirements of their duties. Similar results show that the students are satisfied with their instructors' effort and knowledge (Atar et al., 2020; Cengiz, 2019; zdoruk, 2016; zudođru, 2017). On the other hand, instructors believe that the number of instructors is insufficient, which creates a big challenge in all aspects of the program. They wish to perform more extracurricular activities, have separate skills courses, and have well-functioning assessment and materials development units. They cannot, however, achieve all of these goals while

teaching, preparing, and correcting exams, and providing feedback. Clear from the open-ended questions, students complain about the lack of a native language instructor. Prep grads, on the other hand, viewed this issue as a strength, citing the school's earlier employment of a native language instructor for speaking courses and they felt that their speaking and pronunciation had improved.

Most of the students found the books interesting and suitable for their level as opposed to the studies by Yousif (2017) and Williams (2007) mentioning the level of difficulty of books for the students. Kuzu (2020) and zдорuk (2016) found similar results that the students were content with the books and their contents. Students did, however, believe that the diversity of materials could be expanded. When considering item 8, it may be required to diversify and develop language teaching resources in the preparation program, even though they appear to be adequate at this time. Aside from these, it is clear that the majority of students agree that teachers speak English in class, although some students believe that instructors should speak English more often.

*Process Evaluation:* Most item means in the process dimension of the evaluation are more than 4, indicating that the majority of students found the teaching process satisfactory. In other words, they are pleased with the program's emphasis on all skills, teaching approaches in and out of the classroom, and the evaluation process. The number of exams, their levels, and the subject of the exams seemed to please the students. They also believed that the grading system is fair. The outcomes of the assessment process are also consistent with the findings of Sađlam and Akdemir's (2018) study. Similar findings were found by zдорuk (2016), who stated that students were satisfied with the exercises and classroom activities. The only negative comment from some of the instructors about the exams was the focus on grammar and vocabulary rather than language use, also underlined in Uysal's (2019) evaluation study.

Another aspect of the process evaluation that requires attention is students' and instructors' speaking in English. The lowest means were found in items 11, 12, and 13, which were 3,29, 3,78, and 3,43, respectively. "I use(d) only English in the lessons" (item 11), "I am/was more interested in the lesson when the instructors speak/spoke only English in the lessons" (item 12), and "I am/was more interested in the lesson when the instructors speak/spoke Turkish in the lessons" (item 13). When these items are considered in conjunction with item 11 in the input dimension, which states that the instructor solely uses English in class (mean=3,87), it is plausible to conclude that instructors use English as the medium of instruction; however, they do not avoid using Turkish. More than half of the students agree that they speak English in class. The same students believe that when the instructor speaks entirely in English, they are more engaged in the lesson; but they also believe that speaking in Turkish is beneficial to them. These findings suggest that it may be beneficial for instructors to enhance their usage of English in the classroom, but that they can also utilize Turkish when needed. According to Brevik and Rindal (2020) revealing comparable findings in terms of target language use, it is critical to find a balance in the classroom between the target language and other languages. They found it useful when instructors use their mother tongue to scaffold, to give metalinguistic explanations, task instruction, and practical information. Although the results of the scale indicated satisfaction, there was a need to strengthen speaking activities in class based on open-ended questions and interviews. Furthermore, numerous investigations have revealed that there is a prevalent problem in English preparatory schools in this area (Alizadeh, 2018; Eslek, 2019; Sađlam & Akdemir, 2018; řakirođlu & Kaya, 2017; Yousif, 2017).

*Product Evaluation:* Despite the fact that this dimension had lower means than the others, both parties expressed general satisfaction with means above 3,50. Students considered the program offered a foundation for their future English needs which was also stated in Akpur et al.'s study (2016). Students said they improved their grammar and vocabulary as well as their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, with reading receiving the highest score and speaking receiving the lowest. When the replies of graduates and current students were reviewed independently, items about speaking and pronunciation were the least satisfied, despite the fact that the means of these skills were quite close to each other. Students also complained that more focus should have been placed on speaking ability in open-ended questions. This corresponded to the findings of the process evaluation.

Writing, along with speaking, was the second lowest-rated skill (mean=3,80) in the product dimension based on the students' means. This was supported by the teachers in the interviews, who stressed the importance of students continuing to improve their speaking and writing skills after completing the program. řen Ersoy and Krm Yapıcıođlu (2015) found a similar outcome, with the majority of students believing that prep education is adequate in general but lacking in writing and speaking skills. According to the authors, this could be related to students' unrealistic expectations of a one-year curriculum. Numerous studies (Akpur et al, 2016; Atar et al, 2020; zdoruk, 2016) substantiate the observation that the principal stakeholders of this program, specifically the students and instructors, exhibit considerable satisfaction with the extent of program implementation.

*The optionality of the program:* Based on the results of the study, the optional nature of the program has both advantages and disadvantages; the former outweighing the latter. Besides, students perceived optionality more positively than instructors. The stress-free environment created with the optionality was one of the most notable aspects. The majority of students reported that they felt relaxed during the learning process because there was no obligation if they failed the program. zdoruk (2016) found that students are stressed by their passing grades and wanted that it be reduced. akıcı (2015), in which she analyzed test anxiety levels of language learners in an English preparatory program, also found that students who voluntarily studied in the program were slightly less worried than those who were required to do so.

Another advantage voiced by the students about the optionality of the program was their motivation to study because they were in class with their peers who wanted to learn English and they decided to be there by their own choice. This motivational trigger is supported by the findings of řad and Grbztrk (2009), who discovered that students with optional status had significantly higher levels of intrinsic motivation to learn English than those with compulsory status. Temur (2013) found comparable results when looked at the motivation levels and attitudes of voluntary and compulsory prep school students. However, some of the instructors stated that although the students had high motivation, they behaved like they were forced to be there. They did not make enough effort. This issue was also widely mentioned in the study conducted on the administrators of optional preparatory schools by Aydın et al. (2017).

### Conclusion

In this study, we evaluated an optional English preparatory program at a state university in Trkiye by employing the CIPP model dimensions (Context, Input, Process, Product). To this end, first, we developed the CIPP scale based on the relevant literature and characteristics of the program and then implemented it to the optional English preparatory program graduates and current students. The developed scale is statistically valid and reliable. The qualitative dimension of our study included open-ended questions for students, allowing us the exploration of their personal experiences and perceptions about their preparatory program. We also interviewed the instructors to gain valuable insights into the challenges and successes they encountered during the program's implementation.

In conclusion, the study has successfully evaluated the optional English preparatory program in question using a specially developed CIPP model-based scale. The findings indicate that the optional nature of the program is effective and well-received by both the current students and graduates. However, we can propose several recommendations based on our findings to enhance the effectiveness of the optional English predatory program under consideration. These include increasing the number of instructors, improving physical facilities such as labs and libraries, diversifying the language teaching materials, seeking more opportunities for in and out-of-class target language use, recruiting native speakers, and involving all stakeholders in determining program objectives.

We believe that regular program evaluations and the inclusion of students in decision-making processes are important to ensure continuous improvement and foster a sense of ownership among students. We also believe that our study contributes to the ELT field by developing a reliable CIPP scale for assessing English preparatory programs. This scale, statistically validated, could be a valuable tool for

future evaluations of similar programs. Therefore, our study not only provides insights into the specific English preparatory program evaluated in the current study but also provides a reliable scale for broader application in the field of English language teaching.

#### Author Contribution Rates

The authors have contributed equally to the study.

#### Ethical Declaration

All rules included in the “Directive for Scientific Research and Publication Ethics in Higher Education Institutions” have been adhered to, and none of the “Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics” included in the second section of the Directive have been implemented.

#### Conflict Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest with any institution or individual within the scope of the study.

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Appendix A- CIPP Scale Items

		Strongly disagree.	Disagree.	Partially disagree	Quite agree.	Strongly agree.
<b>CIPP SCALE ITEMS</b>						
<b>CONTEXT</b>						
1	I believe that English preparatory education is necessary for my department.					
2	I am happy to study in the English preparatory program.					
3	The preparatory program is designed to improve basic English skills.					
4	The aims of the English preparatory program are clear and understandable.					
5	The objectives of the English preparatory program are suitable for students' levels.					
6	Weekly lesson hours are sufficient.					
7	The total duration of the preparatory program is sufficient to learn (basic) English.					
8	The preparatory program is up-to-date.					
9	The content of the preparatory program is consistent with the program objectives.					
10	The classes are suitable for English lessons.					
11	There is a library that contains the necessary resources for preparatory school students.					
12	There is a computer laboratory dedicated to the use of preparatory class students.					
13	The English preparatory program has a mission that is clear, understandable, transparent, goal-oriented, based on the needs of stakeholders, and expressed in writing.					
14	The English preparatory program has the infrastructure, workspace, resources, technology, and equipment to serve its mission and objectives.					
15	New students who join the English preparatory program receive all necessary information about the program within the scope of the orientation program.					
<b>INPUT</b>						
1	The textbooks are interesting.					
2	The textbooks are suitable for students' level.					
3	Writing portfolio assignments are beneficial.					
4	Speaking portfolio assignments are beneficial.					
5	Grammar and vocabulary photocopies/exercises are helpful.					
6	The visual-audio materials used in the program help me improve my English skills.					
7	The visual-audio materials used in the program are interesting.					
8	The diversity of materials used in the program is sufficient.					
9	The examples provided by the instructor in class make learning English easier.					
10	The instructors who work in the English preparatory program have the qualifications and competence to fulfill their duties.					
11	The instructor only uses English in class.					
12	I was placed in the correct level based on the placement test results.					
<b>PROCESS</b>						
1	The program places enough emphasis on grammar.					
2	The program places enough emphasis on vocabulary.					
3	The program places enough emphasis on reading skills.					
4	The program places enough emphasis on writing skills.					
5	The program places enough emphasis on listening skills.					
6	The program places enough emphasis on speaking skills.					
7	The English preparatory program encourages active participation from students.					
8	When necessary, topics are reviewed and supported with relevant exercises.					
9	In-class group work, paired work, and/or role-playing activities help improve my English skills.					
10	Individual work helps improve my English skills.					
11	I only speak English in class.					
12	I am more interested in the class when the instructor speaks only in English.					
13	I am more interested in the class when the instructor speaks Turkish.					
14	Extracurricular activities (competitions, meetings, and seminars) increase my motivation.					
15	The number of assessment tools (quizzes, midterms, portfolios, and final exams) is sufficient.					
16	The exams are consistent with the topics covered in class.					
17	The difficulty level of the exams (quizzes/midterms) is appropriate for the students' levels.					
18	The exam results (quizzes/midterms) reflect students' actual English proficiency.					
19	The use of technology in the preparatory program is satisfactory.					
20	The difficulty level of the topics and the time allocated to them are proportional.					
21	The grading system for exams is fair.					
22	The grading system for portfolio assignments is fair.					
23	The feedback given after exams is satisfactory.					
24	The feedback given after portfolio assignments is satisfactory.					
<b>PRODUCT</b>						
1	So far, my grammar has developed enough.					
2	So far, my vocabulary has developed enough.					
3	So far, my reading skills have developed enough.					
4	So far, my writing skills have developed enough.					
5	So far, my listening skills have developed enough.					
6	So far, my speaking skills have developed enough.					
7	So far, my pronunciation has developed enough.					
8	Writing portfolio assignments have helped me improve my writing skills.					
9	Speaking portfolio assignments have helped me improve my speaking skills.					
10	So far, the program has responded to my individual interests and needs.					
11	The program has provided me with a foundation for my future English needs.					

\* The developed CIPP scale in this study can be used freely without seeking explicit permission from the authors, provided that proper credit is given to the original authors.