



A NEED-BASED EVALUATION OF A PREPARATORY SCHOOL PROGRAM: EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTIONS OF FRESHMAN STUDENTS*

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the program carried out at Gazi University Preparatory School and to provide a reflection on the program from the students' point of view. For this purpose, the freshman students studying at partly English-medium departments at Gazi University were chosen as the target population. Long (2005) states that though learners are capable of providing useful and valid insights about their needs, it could be better to access other available sources as well, such as experienced teachers and subject area specialists. Accordingly, two academics were also included in the study. In the light of the related literature, the data collection tools- a questionnaire, a student interview and an academic interview- were developed in consultation with the scholars. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings of the questionnaire were discussed respectively, and complemented by the data gathered through the interviews carried out both with the students and the academics. The findings of the study have revealed that the preparatory program partly met the language needs of the students, and should be developed particularly in terms of listening, speaking and vocabulary. Moreover, the findings have demonstrated once again that there are many factors to be considered while designing or evaluating a curriculum.

Keywords: Curriculum Development, Curriculum Evaluation, Needs Analysis, English for Academic Purposes

BİR HAZIRLIK OKULU PROGRAMININ GEREKSİNİME DAYALI DEĞERLENDİRMESİ: BİRİNCİ SINIF ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN DENEYİM VE DÜŞÜNCELERİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışma Gazi Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu'nda uygulanan İngilizce öğretim programını, birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin bakış açısıyla değerlendirmeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu doğrultuda, hazırlık programının öğrencilerin dil gereksinimlerini ne ölçüde karşıladığını ve öğrencilerin program hakkındaki düşüncelerini belirlemek amacıyla, gereksinime dayalı bir değerlendirme yöntemi benimsenmiştir. Çalışmaya, 2012 yılında Hazırlık Okulu'ndan mezun olan ve 2012-2013 eğitim öğretim yılında öğretim dili kısmen İngilizce olan çeşitli bölümlerde öğrenim gören 256 öğrenci katılmıştır. Ayrıca, değerlendirme sürecine daha derin bir bakış açısı kazandırmak amacıyla çalışmaya iki öğretim görevlisi dahil edilmiştir. Veriler bir öğrenci anketi, yarı yapılandırılmış öğrenci görüşmesi, ve yarı yapılandırılmış öğretim görevlisi görüşmesi aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Toplanan veriler nicel ve nitel olarak incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, hazırlık programının öğrencilerin dil gereksinimlerini bir dereceye kadar karşılayabildiğini, ve öğrencilerin öğretim dili İngilizce olan bölüm derslerinde daha çok dinleme ve konuşma becerileri ile sözcük bilgisine gereksinim duyduklarını göstermiştir. Ayrıca sonuçlar, program geliştirme ve program değerlendirme sürecinin önemini ve gereksinim çözümlemesinin bu süreçteki gerekliliğini bir kez daha ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Program Geliştirme, Program Değerlendirme, Gereksinim Çözümlemesi, Akademik Amaçlı İngilizce

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1.INTRODUCTION

Today we live in an era in which science and technology constantly advance. Many countries have developed educational systems in order not to fall behind these advances. Throughout these developments, it has become more and more apparent that for non-English speaking countries, English serves not only as a foreign language but also as the language of many disciplines. As Freeman and Long (1991:1) state, English- a second language for most of the people of the world- has increasingly become the international language for business and commerce, science and technology and international relations and diplomacy. Accordingly, in educational settings, particularly in colleges and universities, English has no longer been regarded simply as a tool of communication; and its importance is highly respected. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:7) summarize this striking shift claiming "Whereas English had previously decided its own destiny, it now became subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers."

1.1.Problem of the study

A great number of universities in Turkey realizing the fact that the importance of English in all aspects of life is increasing day by day have started to provide a one-year voluntary or compulsory English preparatory class for their students. However, in order for a language program to succeed, there are various vital components to be considered; and it is a given that one of these components is evaluation. According to Finney (2002), evaluation must be included in all phases of curriculum planning (needs analysis, goals and objectives, language testing, materials development, language teaching) and implementation. Firstly, this is because evaluation makes it possible to see whether the goals of the curriculum have been met or not. Another thing that makes evaluation necessary is that it provides an opportunity to analyze the effectiveness of the program itself. For an evaluation study that is carried out for the former purpose, an assessment of the participants within the program seems necessary. If the purpose for evaluation is to examine the effectiveness, on the other hand, then it is likely to focus on the teachers, the methodology, the materials and so on (Finney, 2002).

1.2. Purpose of the Study

There have been many studies carried out on language program evaluation in the preparatory schools in Turkey. However, despite its seven years of demanding service, only a limited number of studies on curriculum evaluation have been carried out at Gazi University Preparatory School. In this context, this study aims to provide an evaluation of the current language program in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of it and enhance the quality of provided education at the preparatory school. With this purpose in mind, the study attempts to answer three questions, the first of which relates to the language needs of freshman students studying at partly English-medium departments, another of which relates to the fitness of purpose of the preparatory program; and last of which relates to the perceptions of the students on the preparatory program.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is obvious that curriculum development and syllabus design are the keystones in any language teaching program and are of great importance in ELT. Brown (1995:19) emphasizes the significance of curriculum development suggesting "Like any other educational experiences, the quality of language teaching depends upon the use of curriculum development process". Similarly, syllabus design is highly appreciated since it is regarded as a key factor for successful classroom instruction.

In the literature on language teaching, the terms curriculum and syllabus are occasionally defined differently, and sometimes used interchangeably. However, what is common in almost all distinctions made is that syllabus is subordinated to curriculum, which means a single curriculum might be the starting point of various syllabi. Correspondingly, while following the steps of syllabus design, it is necessary to relate it to the wider field of curriculum development. In other words, it is possible to regard syllabus design as part of course design, which in turn, forms a part of the curriculum as a whole.

2.1. Developing, Evaluating and Renewing the Curriculum

Several approaches to curriculum development have been reported in the literature in the field of ELT. One of the most important statements on the nature and process of curriculum development ; however, was made by Brown (1995). Emphasizing the need for the continuity of the process and the integrity of all the elements, Brown (1995) puts forward six stages within the curriculum development process: Needs analysis, goals and objectives, language testing, materials development, language teaching and program evaluation.

Richards (2001:1), in a broader manner, suggests that language curriculum development deals with the following questions:

- 1.What procedures can be used to determine the content of a language program?
- 2.What are learners' needs?
- 3.How can learners' needs be determined?
- 4.What contextual factors need to be considered in planning a language program?
- 5.What is the nature of aims and objectives in teaching and how can these be developed?
- 6.What factors are involved in planning the syllabus and the units of organization in a course?
- 7.How can good teaching be provided in a program?
- 8.What issues are involved in selecting, adapting, and designing instructional materials?
- 9.How can one measure the effectiveness of a language program?

According to Howard (2007), on the other hand, at the university level, where there are major fields of study that encompass a collection of courses, there is also the opportunity to design a coherent curriculum which needed not be sequential in the traditional sense. In this context, it might be problem-based or issues-based, with students making ever-deepening inquiries into central concepts and principles. Since in such a curriculum development process, the policy would be open to any modifications; it could be evaluated and renewed when necessary.

2.2. Language Curriculum Evaluation Procedure

Curriculum is basically concerned with the process of planning, implementation and evaluation of a language program. In this process, however, it is important that all elements be integrated so that decisions made at one level are not in conflict with those at another (Nunan, 1988:4). Such an emphasis on an 'integrated approach' (Thomas, 2005) has led to a more

systematic and ‘learner-centered’ approach where curriculum is viewed as a ‘cyclical process of development, revision, maintenance and renewal which need to continue throughout the life of the curriculum’ (Johnson, 1989).

Evaluation can be regarded as an integral and on-going part of the curriculum development process which fundamentally aims at improving the curriculum - teaching and learning in all aspects. Curriculum evaluation might provide the chances of trying out alternatives, examining and reflecting on the outcomes and making necessary further refinements. Given that a quality education requires a quality curriculum; evaluation should be regarded as a critical component to be carried out meticulously in each phase of curriculum design.

2.3. The Place of Needs Analysis in Curriculum Development

Needs analysis, first introduced by Michael West in the 1920s and sometimes referred to as needs assessment, became well established in the mid-1970s with the rise of learner-centered and communication-oriented approaches to language teaching. The significance of needs analysis has led to the development of various approaches which in turn has brought attention to the widely recognized importance of curriculum development (Yalden, 1987; Brown, 1995; Hutchinson & Waters, 2002).

Besides being useful in developing goals, objectives and content; needs analysis may also “provide data for reviewing and evaluating an existing program” (Richards 1984:5). Needs analysis is "an important means of carrying out research prior to designing and evaluating lessons/materials/syllabus and it helps draw a profile of students/course in order to determine and prioritize the needs for which students require English (L2)" (Richards et al, 1992, as cited in Jordan, 1997:20). In other words, needs analysis can be regarded as a continuous process of questioning and checking, so it is closely associated with evaluation processes within curriculum development. According to Nunan (1988), needs analysis in evaluation process is of great importance because the most important information relating to the learners’ subjective needs can be obtained only when a language program is implemented and because the information regarding the learners’ objective needs from an initial needs analysis is often superficial.

2.4. Needs Analysis and English for Academic Purposes

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is usually defined as teaching English with the aim of assisting learners’ study or research in that language (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 8; Jordan, 1997:1). It may be regarded as a type of ESP in that the content coincides explicitly with learners' needs.

In a broader sense, EAP seems to refer to the language skills and related practices that learners need in order to be able to study or work in an entirely or partly English medium higher education. EAP learners are generally higher education students who need to learn English in order to succeed in their academic studies. Therefore, the objective of an EAP course seems to help these students learn some of the linguistic – mainly institutional and disciplinary - practices involved in studying through the medium of English.

It is apparent in the literature that EAP courses are usually based on a needs analysis which reveals the opinions of various stakeholders into account. By doing so, EAP courses aim to specify what it is that the learners have to do through the medium of English. Therefore, they adopt an approach to learning and teaching that believes that it is possible and useful to specify the required language in a particular academic context and that it is worthwhile to

focus teaching on this. Accordingly, an EAP curriculum might have to do with the questions such as "Why are the students learning English?", "What language and practices are they going to need further?" or as a more judgmental question "Does this curriculum really help them to satisfy their needs?".

Liyanage and Birch (2001) emphasize that any English course that is designed to prepare students to cope with the demands of university study has to focus on what Cummins (1982, cited in Liyanage & Birch, 2001) refers to as "context-reduced" language which is rather more abstract and relies less heavily on an immediate context; and it has to be different from the content of general ESL courses that focuses on the "context-embedded" language which emphasizes mainly on everyday interaction. Here, it might be concluded that English for General Purposes (EGP) and EAP have totally different curricula in terms of learner profile, course content, goals, and instruction.

Jordan (1997) claims that curricula of EAP courses aiming at catering for students who are taking courses of advanced study at university level have to be academic-oriented and presuppose solid "literacy abilities". This assertion corresponds well with Liyanage and Birch's (2001) suggestion that the EAP curriculum has to build on student awareness towards a particular language of the academy, and certain ways of talking, reading and writing about ideas and texts. It can be implied that both the language and study skills are two important components in any EAP course. The inclusion of various language and study skills in the content of EAP would help the students to develop the "literacy abilities" and that the "academic literacy" will continue to be applied to the complex set of skills, not only to those relating to the mastery of reading and writing (Mo, 2005).

3. METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this study was to identify the freshman students' perceptions regarding the preparatory program in an effort to understand better whether the program met their needs or not. The study attempted to form a basis for the evaluation of the program carried out at the Preparatory School. In order to gather the necessary data, a questionnaire and interviews that will be explained in detail later within the study were used.

3.1. Participants

The participants included in this study can be categorized in two groups: a total of 256 freshman students that graduated from the Preparatory School in 2012 and enrolled at several partly English-medium departments in 2012-2013 academic year; and two academics lecturing in two of these departments.

For the questionnaire, 256 freshman students studying at various departments at Gazi University in 2012-2013 academic year participated in the study. For the interviews; on the other hand, among the students who initially took the questionnaire, a total of 12 students were voluntarily included in the study. In order to gain a deeper insight into the study and complement students' self-reported data, two academics were also included in the study.

3.2. Instruments

Since this is an evaluation study, both qualitative and quantitative data were needed to gain a clear understanding. Therefore, a well-rounded and need-based questionnaire, a student interview guide and an academic interview guide were used to collect data.

After reviewing the related literature, examining the studies carried out in the field, and interviewing a focus group of 10 students; the content and items to be included in the questionnaire were determined. The questionnaire was pilot tested for this particular study; and its revised version was implemented in the study. The piloted and revised version of the questionnaire, which was the main instrument of this study, was composed of three sections. (See Appendices A1 and A2)

According to Woolley (2009) qualitative and quantitative data complement each other well. Therefore, after the administration of the questionnaire, a semi-structured student interview guide (See Appendices B1 and B2) including 3 questions and a semi-structured academic interview including 4 questions were prepared (See Appendices C1 and C2). These interviews were used as the second data collection tool with the purpose of gathering more detailed data; and by all means the aim of each question within the interview was to complement the interpretation of the data gathered through the questionnaire.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The data were gathered through a questionnaire, a semi-structured student interview, and a semi-structured academics interview during the spring semester in 2012-2013 academic year.

The questionnaire was administered to a total of 256 freshman students studying at various partly English-medium departments at the Faculty of Architecture, the Faculty of Engineering, the Faculty of Sciences, and the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. The students were asked to complete the questionnaires in their classes during the class hours.

The interviews with 12 volunteer students and 2 academics were held at a predetermined date and time at the above-mentioned faculties. In order for the participants to comment on the questions comfortably, the interviews were held in Turkish. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researchers to be used in data analysis phase.

3.4. Data Analysis

As mentioned before, this study adopts both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Hence, at data analysis stage, the researchers dealt with the raw data in two phases: quantitative analysis of the data gathered through questionnaires, and qualitative analysis of the data obtained through interviews. Finally, quantitative and qualitative data were combined to be discussed in detail.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. General Background of the Students

As revealed in the previous part, all of the students having involved in the study ($f= 256$, 100 %) were freshman students and ranged in age from 18 years to 25 years. Of the students 145 (56.6%) were males and 111 (43.4 %) were females. The frequency and the percentage of the students enrolled at the Faculty of Architecture (Architecture, Urban and Regional Planning, and Industrial Product Design), the Faculty of Engineering (Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Computer Engineering, Electrical-Electronics Engineering, Industrial Engineering and Mechanical Engineering), the Faculty of Sciences (Statistics) and the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (Business Administration, Public Administration,

International Relations) were 20 (7.8 %), 104 (40.6 %), 30 (11.7 %), 102 (39.9 %) respectively.

All the students who took part in the study (f=256, 100 %) reported having studied at the Preparatory School for a year. When the students were requested to provide information about the two skills that they assumed they developed most in the Preparatory School, 107 (41.8 %) of them selected "reading and writing", 51 (19.9 %) of them selected "reading and listening", 44 (17.2 %) chose "reading and speaking", 32 (12.5 %) of them chose "writing and listening", 18 (7 %) of them selected "writing and speaking", and only 4 (1.6 %) of them chose "listening and speaking".

The students were also expected to order the given language skills from the most important (1) to the least important (4) in terms of their current needs and success in their departments. While 29.3% of the students said that "listening" is the most needed language skill, 27.1 % of them confirmed that "speaking" is the most needed. "Reading", on the other hand was chosen the most needed skill by 24.2 % of the students; and "writing" was chosen the most needed skill by only 19.4 % of them. In conclusion, the students' responses to the last item in the first section of the questionnaire showed that the students had taken at least 2 and at most 6 English-medium content courses in their departments until then.

4.2. Comparison of the Students' Language Needs and Competencies

In order to assess the adequacy of the program and to classify the extent to which their needs have been met, the students' language needs and competencies in their English-medium content courses were compared.

Referring to the results of the study, it might be assumed that there are critical differences between many of the students' language needs and perceived competencies. Accordingly, while the students often need to take notes, they can partly accomplish this. Similarly, the students often need to get specific information while listening to a lecture; however, they could partly satisfy this need. The results may also reveal that the students often need to predict unknown words while listening to a lecture; however, they do not feel capable of meeting this need. The students often need to answer questions asked by the lecturer; yet they can partly fulfill this. Likewise, the students often need to ask questions to the lecturer; however, they reported being partly competent in this. While the students often need to participate in discussions during a lecture, they can partly satisfy this need. Moreover, the students' need for retelling a text they read in their own words was not satisfied, either. There is also an important difference between the students' need for guessing unfamiliar words while reading a text and their competence in doing this. The students' need for translating texts by using a dictionary and their competence in meeting this need did not overlap, either. Lastly and surprisingly, the students said that they sometimes or need to write short notes, e-mails in informal language; however, they can satisfy this need very well.

Accordingly, the results may show that the students' needs are centered on listening and speaking skills, as well as, vocabulary. It can be said that these results show a similarity with the findings of a needs assessment study on English language needs of the Tour Guidance students of the Faculty of Applied Sciences at Başkent University conducted by Ekici (2003). Moreover, the results might also indicate that the students need translation skills within their departmental studies, which to some extent corresponds to Alagözlü's study (1994) carried out at the Faculty of Medicine in Cumhuriyet University with the purpose of revealing the English language skill needs of fourth year Medical students.

4.3. Students' Perceptions on the Preparatory Program

When the findings regarding the students' perceptions on the preparatory program itself are examined, it is obvious that the students regard the content of the program as inadequate and irrelevant. As for the materials (books and supplementary materials) used within the lessons, the results indicate that the coursebooks do not attract to the students. Another implication that can be obtained from the findings might be that the exam questions are not considered as stylistically similar to the exercises covered in class.

4.4. Results of the Interviews

When the students were asked to refer to the main language problems they confronted in their English-medium content courses, the interviewees reported three significant problems: "insufficient vocabulary", difficulty in "listening to a lecture and taking notes simultaneously", and "translating texts".

About the contribution of the preparatory program to their English-medium content courses, most of the students said that the preparatory program had contributed "to some extent", however, they added that it could be more effective and challenging. A few of them, on the other hand, reported that the preparatory program had "no contribution to their further studies at all". That their reading skills were rather improved was agreed on by all the students.

Respecting the positive sides of the preparatory program, the students stated that they were highly "satisfied with their instructors' attitudes". They all agreed that the instructors were really friendly, encouraging and facilitating. The second positive aspect for the preparatory school students is the "frequent mid-term exams and quizzes". They wished for the short interval between the exams, which fostered them to study regularly and gave them the chance to be tested on a subject matter shortly after learning. Finally, the students were also pleased about the "alternative assessment tools" (portfolios, project works, presentations etc.). They mostly agreed that these assessment tools gave them an opportunity both to balance their lower graded quizzes and to be engaged in various activities.

As for the negative sides of the preparatory program; all the students, first of all, stated that the "unbalanced level of the students at the beginning of the school year" was quite a drawback, both for the high and lower achievers. Accordingly, they said that some of the students were high achievers and they got bored during the first weeks of the school year and lost concentration, whereas some of the students were lower achievers and they got discouraged by the speed of the program. The second negative side of the preparatory program announced by the interviewees was the "content of the program". The interviewees stated that the instruction served for mainly daily language, which resulted in limited vocabulary and irrelevant information. Correspondingly, they reported that although they were somewhat familiar with the daily language, they considered themselves as unskilled in their departmental studies. Finally, all of the interviewees complained that the coursebooks were extremely boring and they lost their interest in the language mostly because of the "unpleasant coursebooks".

Although the purpose of this study was to evaluate the preparatory program from students' point of view, in order to obtain complementary information and a different point of view on the preparatory program, two academics -one from the Faculty of Architecture and one from the Faculty of Economics and Administration- were interviewed. The data obtained through transcribing the interviews were then classified in categories for each question.

When the academics were asked the significance and necessity of English language in English-medium departments, they both agreed that language proficiency was of "vital importance". One of the academics reported that: "Being competent in English at university is as essential and crucial as being competent in Math at primary and secondary schools.". Besides, they added that English competence was not only important for their performance in English-medium content courses, but it was also important for further academic studies, such as deeper research, attending seminars, preparing and presenting projects or joining Erasmus and Socrates programs.

The second item in the interview was about the major problems encountered by the students and observed by academics over English-medium content courses. The responses given by the academics revealed a parallelism with the students' responses. They both complained that "the students usually did not understand the lectures". Accordingly, the academics stated that they occasionally tended to switch to Turkish in order to make their students benefit from the course. Besides, the students also "lacked the ability to take notes while listening to a lecture". As a result, the academics told that they often had to distribute class notes after each lecture. Another problem stated by the academics was that their students could not attend in-class discussions, review the literature or prepare presentations. Both academics reported that although this would not create a major problem with the freshmen, the students were expected to carry out such tasks in their upcoming years in their departments.

About the contribution of the preparatory program to English medium content courses, the two academics stated that the freshmen in 2012-2013 are "rather more competent" than the ones enrolled in the previous academic years. Nevertheless, a small proportion of the students were reported to be successful and able to pass most of the courses. The academics added that the students suffered from their lack of vocabulary in basic concepts, which ultimately resulted in most of the problems.

The last item in the interview was about the suggestions of the academics for the enhancement of the preparatory program. In this context, they told that the students were required to be prepared for the department. One of the academics underlined that "The preparatory program is supposed to be a warm-up for departmental studies after high school education." Therefore, the academics recommended that the preparatory program should "raise its standards". Moreover, it was suggested that the preparatory program should have a well-organized curriculum and avoid constant change in order to maintain standardization. Lastly, they both strongly suggested that the preparatory program should keep developing.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study showed that the students needed listening and speaking skills, and vocabulary rather than the other language skills in their English-medium content courses. The results also showed that there were some mismatches between the students' language needs and perceived competencies; and the preparatory program met the students' language needs to some extent. Besides, the results revealed that some improvements were needed to be made, particularly in the content, materials, and assessment aspect of the preparatory program. In this sense, some implications and suggestions were presented with the purpose of enhancing the preparatory program.

5.1. Implications and Suggestions for Practice

In this context, the results regarding the students' perceived language needs and competence have indicated that the students needed most of the skills and/ or sub-skills given in the

questionnaire in their English-medium content lessons; however, they do not feel as competent as they need to be especially in those regarding listening and speaking skills, and vocabulary. In other words, the findings of the study support the view that the students greatly need to increase their general proficiency in English. Hence, it might be concluded that though the current program has enabled them to become proficient to some extent, their perceived language competence does not meet the academic requirements in their field of study. According to White (1988:69), “The realization that equal weighing for all four skills is not appropriate to all learners is one of the insights provided by ESP and needs analysis”. Correspondingly, it might be suggested that more emphasis be given to the listening and listening-related sub-skills, speaking and speaking-related sub-skills, and vocabulary teaching and practice.

As for the program; on the other hand, the first suggestion might be that the content of the preparatory program could be brought to a more challenging and need-based position. In a broader sense, the second suggestion might be that since needs analysis provides both evaluative and constructive information, it might be regarded as an integral part of any stage within further curriculum development studies in the Preparatory School. Accordingly, Long (2005:19) advocates there is an urgent need for courses of all kinds to be relevant – and to be seen to be relevant – to the needs of specific groups of learners and of society at large. Moreover, it might be useful to select and/or evaluate the coursebooks from the students' point of view since coursebooks are seen as the main source for instruction. Finally, the exam questions might be prepared more in parallel with in class activities.

5.2. Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Although this study mainly aims to evaluate the current curriculum of the preparatory program, it also brings an invaluable insight into future studies by analyzing the needs of the students taking English-medium content courses.

The preparatory program in 2011-2012 academic year had different coursebooks, materials, assessment tools and furthermore, different teaching hours than the previous years; thus, the freshmen who participated in this study were exposed to a different curriculum than the sophomore, the junior and the senior students. The fact that only freshmen students of the university have participated in this study is one of the limitations. Therefore, a further study which is conducted with the students from the four different classes would bring a precious insight into the results. In the future, this study could be broadened in order to develop the curriculum of the preparatory program. Moreover, the number of the students that will participate in the questionnaires and interviews could be increased for a more sound result.

In this study, as all of the participants had attended the same preparatory program and took the same amount of English medium courses during their freshmen year, they were regarded as a single group. In a future study, the participants could be separated by their departments and their needs could be analyzed depending on their specific academic and/or occupational language requirements.

During this study, due to time limitations, only two academics from two faculties were interviewed; nevertheless, the results of these interviews brought a valuable point of view into this study. In a future study, if more academics are interviewed, a deeper insight could be attained. More interviews that will be carried out with more academics from all departments might extend the horizon in developing the curriculum and increase its effectiveness.

In addition, the instructors of the preparatory program are also familiar with the student profile and their perceptions on learning English. Therefore, their engagement in a further study might give a source of information that cannot be undervalued.

Another limitation of this study was that the administrative stakeholders (dean, chairs of the departments, etc.) did not take part in this study. In a future study, their opinions and suggestions might shed a guiding light.

In general, the studies on curriculum development need classroom observation. However, in this study, due to time limitations and because there are four faculties and several departments involved in the study, classroom observations could not be fulfilled. In a future study, observing English-medium content courses and the student competence in these classes might bring a different aspect of the students' needs into the study.

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APPENDIX A1

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

Dear student,

This questionnaire form has been developed to collect data for a thesis study. The aim of the aforesaid study is to make contributions to the development of the program carried out at Gazi University Preparatory School. In order to reach this aim, students' language needs and to what extent the current language education of the Preparatory School meets these needs should be identified meticulously. For this reason, your feedback is of great importance. Your answers will be used for this study only and evaluated collectively. **Do not** write your names on this form.

Thank you in advance for contributions.

10.04.2013

Aynur COŞANER

SECTION I

General Background

Please write or mark the correct information for you.

1) Sex: Female Male

2) Age: _____

3) Faculty: _____

4) Department _____

5) How long did you study at the Preparatory School?

One year Two years Other (Please write) _____

I failed due to non-attendance and passed the exemption exam.

6) Please mark the two language skills that you believe you developed most in the Preparatory School.

Reading Writing Listening Speaking

7) Please order the below language skills from the most important (1) to the least important (4) in terms of their contribution to your current needs and success in your department.

Reading (____) Writing (____) Listening (____) Speaking(____)

8) How many different English-medium content courses have you taken in your department so far?

- None One Two Three
- Four Five Other (Please write) _____

SECTION II

Please state your opinions about the statements below. Mark one option only for each statement.

24. Converting short notes into paragraphs										
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SECTION III

Please state your opinions about the statements below. Mark one option only for each statement.

5 = Strongly agree 4= Agree 3= Neutral 2= Disagree 1=Completely disagree

A) PROGRAM CONTENT					
1. I think English preparatory education is necessary for my department.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I am glad to have studied at the preparatory school.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The program covered in the preparatory class aimed at my needs.	5	4	3	2	1
4. The preparatory program enabled me to reach the level of proficiency necessary for my content courses.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I believe my knowledge of vocabulary was improved sufficiently.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I believe my knowledge of grammar was improved sufficiently.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I believe my speaking skill was improved sufficiently.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I believe my writing skill was improved sufficiently.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I believe my listening skill was improved sufficiently.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I believe my reading skill was improved sufficiently.	5	4	3	2	1
11. The assignments (projects, presentations) were useful.	5	4	3	2	1
B) METHOD					
12. The teachers encouraged us to participate in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
13. I was satisfied with the way the lessons were taught.	5	4	3	2	1
14. The teachers had an authoritative manner.	5	4	3	2	1
15. The teachers spoke mostly English during the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
16. The courses taught were revised regularly.	5	4	3	2	1
17. We were provided with the necessary opportunities to practice.	5	4	3	2	1
C) ACTIVITIES					
18. Activities (games, contests) promoting in-class interaction were carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
19. Grammar was taught via listening and reading activities.	5	4	3	2	1

20. Vocabulary was taught via listening and reading activities.	5	4	3	2	1
21. Translation activities were carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
22. Pair work and group work activities were carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
23. Activities requiring creativity (act out, discussions, etc.) were carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
24. I liked to participate in the activities carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
D) MATERIALS					
25. Activities (games, contests) promoting in-class interaction were carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
26. Grammar was taught via listening and reading activities.	5	4	3	2	1
27. Vocabulary was taught via listening and reading activities.	5	4	3	2	1
28. Translation activities were carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
29. Pair work and group work activities were carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
30. Activities requiring creativity (act out, discussions, etc.) were carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
31. I liked to participate in the activities carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
32. Activities (games, contests) promoting in-class interaction were carried out in the lessons.	5	4	3	2	1
33. Grammar was taught via listening and reading activities.	5	4	3	2	1
34. Vocabulary was taught via listening and reading activities.	5	4	3	2	1
E) EXAMS AND ASSESSMENT					
35. The exam questions covered what we were taught.	5	4	3	2	1
36. The exams contributed to the learning process.	5	4	3	2	1
37. The exam questions were stylistically similar to the exercises covered in class.	5	4	3	2	1
38. The alternative assessment types (portfolio, presentation etc.) were useful.	5	4	3	2	1
39. The exam instructions were easy to understand.	5	4	3	2	1
40. The exam questions were not in line with what was covered in class.	5	4	3	2	1
41. It would have been better if assessment was made only through exams.	5	4	3	2	1
42. Exam questions were difficult and exam durations were inadequate.	5	4	3	2	1

Notes:

APPENDIX B1

English Version of the Student Interview

0. In which faculty do you study? What is your department?
1. What are the main language problems you encounter in your English-medium content courses?
2. What is your opinion about the contribution of the preparatory program to your content courses?
3. What do you think are the positive and negative sides of the preparatory program?

APPENDIX C1

English Version of the Academic Interview

1. To what extent is English important and necessary for the students studying in English-medium departments at your faculty?
2. What are the main language problems the students encounter in English-medium content courses?
3. What is your opinion about the contribution of the preparatory program to students' English-medium content courses?
4. Considering the language needs of the students studying in English-medium departments at your faculty, what are your suggestions for the enhancement of the preparatory program for a more effective ?