

RE-EVALUATION OF THE COMPONENTS OF INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to define the challenges that college students face during the intensive English program and present the potential solutions. A previously developed survey by Gökdemir (2005 pp251-264) was used for the quantitative side and for the qualitative part, a number of interview questions were prepared with the help of four experts and 32 students were randomly selected and interviewed with the questions. The interview questions were analyzed as qualitative assessment. The results revealed that the demographic variables are not important for attitudes toward language learning. The students determined a number of elements to be improved in the current curriculum, teacher's and learner's competence along with physical environment for language learning. Students also identified a number of challenges that they face while gaining the language skills along with personal strategies to overcome such challenges. Heavy grammar based teaching strategy and evaluation along with low level of native exposure and inadequate student participation were the main problems listed by students.

Keywords: Foreign language education, language problems in Turkey, higher education, language teaching methods

TÜRKİYE'DE UYGULANAN İNGİLİZCE HAZIRLIK PROGRAMI BİLEŞENLERİNİN YENİDEN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amaçları: (i) Kafkas üniversitesinde öğrenim gören öğrencilerin uygulanan yabancı dil öğrenme programının etkinliğine, kullanılan araç-gereçlere, kaynak ve yönteme, yabancı dil öğretim sistemine ve öğrenci başarısını ölçme şekline dair düşüncelerini yordamak, (ii) mevcut programın geliştirilmesi için öğrencilerin önerilerini elde etmek ve (iii) öğrencilerin dil becerilerini edinme konusunda yaşadıkları güçlükler ile bu güçlüklerin üstesinden nasıl geldiklerini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Çalışmada Gökdemir (2005 sf251-264) tarafından geliştirilen “İngilizce derslerinde karşılaşılan sorunlar ölçeği” ayrıca araştırmanın nitel kısmını oluşturan, araştırmacı tarafından 4 uzman görüşü alınarak geliştirilen görüşme soruları kullanılmıştır. Görüşme soruları, seçkisiz örnekleme belirlenen 32 öğrenciye uygulanmış ve elde edilen cevaplar içerik

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analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Araştırma sonucunda, anketin uygulandığı dönemde uygulanan dil eğitim programında alt becerilerin önem düzeyi, öğretim üyelerinde dil öğretim teknikleri, öğrencilerde ise öğrenmeyi öğrenme konusunda eksikliklerinin giderilmesi ihtiyacı tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca dil eğitim programlarının idaresinden sorumlu birimlerin materyal ve dil öğrenme ortamlarının hazırlanmasında daha etkin rol oynama ihtiyacı da çalışmanın sonuçları arasındadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yabancı dil öğrenimi, Türkiye'de dil problemleri, yükseköğretim, dil öğretim yöntemleri

Introduction

In the European Union, 83% of primary students are learning at least one foreign language (Eurydice Report, 2007 pp61-62) and 50% of the adults can speak at least one foreign language and the figures are much higher in countries like Luxemburg, Slovakia, and Latvia (Eurobarometer, 2006 pp7-8). Turkey has a very long history of the foreign language education and efforts were intensified in English in past five decades (Eskicumalı and Türedi, 2010 pp749-751). With an aim to increase English compatibility, mandatory courses have started as early as second grade (e.g. at the age of 8). However, in the colleges and universities where teaching medium is English or for the English Language programs, Turkish universities are applying an intensive English Preparatory Program for a school year before they start taking formal courses. Although in theory each Turkish universities structure their own Intensive English Program, there is a common consensus about 24-28 class hour per week of teaching in terms of four main skills courses.

There is a massive transformation in Turkish Higher Education system in last two decades and an increase of 121% was observed in number of students between 2000 and 2010 alone (Çetinsaya, 2014 pp71-72). This also implies dynamic and changing student body in each program. Therefore, there is a need to re-evaluate the intensive English Program. In this study, we evaluated common problems and challenges for students of Intensive English Program in a public University in Eastern Turkey and provided suggestions for overcoming or reducing such problems.

Methods

Research Model

The study was designed both as a qualitative and quantitative study. The data was gathered from the students of Intensive English Program of Kafkas University, Turkey who are aiming to pursue English Language and Literature Program as well as English + French Turkish Translation Department. Students were asked to fill out a questionnaire and answer interview questions. The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part is of 5-point Likert Scale and is categorized as strongly agree / agree / don't know / disagree / strongly disagree. The second part includes the reasons for choosing English as a departmental major and the last part consists of suggestions for solving the problems encountered in English classes at the University.

Interview questions were used to form the qualitative part of the study. This part consists of two main questions and six sub questions under each main question which are prepared by the researcher with expert opinions and prepared for skills such as grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, writing, and reading.

Sampling

A total of 412 students enrolled in Intensive English Program of Foreign Language School, who will study in English Language and Literature Department and English + French Turkish Translation Department of Kafkas University participated in the research.

Interview Questions

In order to evaluate the program based on qualitative assessments, we prepared interview questions with the help of three foreign language experts and to confirm the grammatical accuracy of the questions, we consulted to a Turkish language expert. The answers from the students were recorded in written format. The questions consist of two basic questions, each of which contains six sub-questions. Interview questions are designed to be used as a basic data collection tool. The prepared questions were classified as semi-structured interview questions because they were intended for deeper investigation of the problems. The strategy used is the structured interview strategy, because the exact sequence and style of the questions are pre-determined and the same basic questions are asked to all interviewees in the open-ended format in the same order.

The Scale Used for Program Assessment

We used the scale named "Problems Encountered in Intensive English Programs" developed by Gökdemir (2005 pp251-264) to quantitatively evaluate current program. Gökdemir (2005 pp251-264) reported test-retest reliabilities of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha =0.77 (Gökdemir, 2005 pp251-264).

Results and Discussion

Findings were analyzed and evaluated in parallel to sub-problems.

a. Analyses of demographic variables

The obtained data were evaluated for the total score in the context of the departments where the students were enrolled, the gender, and the high school type they graduated from. Presence of significant differences-if any- among these parameters was investigated. The first test for this purpose was investigation of total questionnaire score and the department that students were enrolled. However, the differences between the departments enrolled, gender, and the high schools graduated were not statistically significant (Table 1). It shows that the departmental difference, gender or previously attended high school type among students do not affect their opinion about the effectiveness Intensive English Program and its curriculum along with the tools and resources used, the source and methodology, the foreign language teaching system and the way of measuring student achievements.

Table 1. Significance of the departments where the students were enrolled, the gender, and the high school type they graduated from on their attitude toward the intensive English program and its curriculum on the basis of the total score.

Test Parameters	Applied Test	P-value
Enrolled Departments	ANOVA	0,108

Gender	t-test	1,275
Graduated High School	ANOVA	0,281

b. Effectiveness of the current program

We deduce the effectiveness of the current program based on a structured questionnaire as well as open ended interview questions.

The first part of the scale was composed of 34 items, and the student attitudes towards the Intensive English Program and its curriculum were deduced. In addition, when the overall score implied ineffectiveness, we tried to reveal the reasons. Designed as a 5-point Likert Scale, this part is the most comprehensive part of the scale.

When the items “classes are more difficult than those in high school” (Q3), “classes are including sufficient amount of practical activities” (Q5), “there is enough opportunity for student participation” (Q6), “class hour is being effectively used (Q8), and “students are not active in classes” (Q30), were analyzed, the learner answered these items with an average 3.95, 3.43, 3.85, 3.42, 3.76, and 3.68, respectively. In these items, the response interval of the students was very close to each other and it was observed that the students found the method successful in the first 4 items. At the 30th question, however, it was confirmed that the students are not generally actively participating to the classroom activities, thus confirming the idea that the current program contained deficiencies at this point.

The scale is interrelated in a way that the C section of the scale is devoted to infer the reason of the shortcomings determined in section A, if any. For example, items 10, 11, 28, and 31 of A part were designed to test the success of the language teaching program. The C Section is a multiple choice section that is composed of a question which is asking “what are the possible ways to improve the current program”.

Table 2. The statistical analyses of answers given to the “what are the possible ways to improve the current program” in the last section of the questionnaire (section c).

	C1	C2	C3	C4
Sample size	380	380	380	380
Mean freq.	0,13	0,57	0,48	0,73
Std. Dev	0,55	0,49	0,50	0,44

Among the four options, the most marked option was “an increased budget should be allocated for the program” at a frequency of 73%. After this option, “content of the courses should be more related to the study area” was chosen by the students with a frequency of 57%. “Language related class hours after the intensive program should be expanded” option was selected 48% of the time. The option with the least frequency (13%) was “the current system should continue as it is” (Table 2). Students did not only find the program ineffective but also recommended changes since only 13% thought that current program could continue without modification.

In addition to the questionnaire, answers to the interview questions of 32 students were analyzed for content and discussed in the context of effectiveness of the

program. The main problems encountered in language education in literature were listed as method, program, learner factor, teaching factor, course tools and materials, physical environment, and environmental conditions. Therefore, the qualitative parts of the study evaluated in the context of abovementioned framework.

A number of proposals have been made for further improvement of the existing program in the interviews. These suggestions are listed below. For the reading skill, reading the passages in advance (S1), encouraging reading outside the classroom, and holding students accountable for reading books (S5) were suggested. Furthermore, more interesting texts should be selected for reading activities (S6 and S21). The insufficient amount of reading class hours in the current program (S6) has also been expressed in this context. For the writing skills, students suggested more time for writing activities (S6, S16, S17, S22, S27), to give more room for in class writing activities (S1, S8, S16) and to increase writing homework (S3, S8, S27). In grammar acquisition, it is suggested that retrospective reminders be more often (S1), explanation be simpler and clearer (S5), teacher's practice of grammar instead of explaining the rules, increasing in class communicative exercises (S7, S13, S16, S19). Moreover, making the grammar courses free of the boredom (S13), allowing the students become more active (S13) and preventing the monotonous lessons using technology (S16) were also mentioned in this context. In addition, it has been suggested that the teacher should separately categorize the subjects in the grammar that are very complicated (S20), use the native language to explain such subjects (S26), provide more intense samples regarding the topic explained (S26), and lastly avoid repetition of already known and simple subject so that more time left for the complicated topics.

In order for a more effective acquisition of vocabulary, teaching new and practical memory techniques were demanded (S3, S29). Students also suggested the development of a mandatory word acquisition system and the close monitoring mechanism of teachers while improving word skills (S14, S15, and S16). In addition to these, it is suggested that clues about where and how to use the words be given (S27), emphasis to visual in vocabulary teaching be present, the teaching materials be developed in this direction (S28). In addition to all listed suggestions, students also collectively demanded to elevate the class hour of speaking (S14, S19, S20, S25, S27), listening (S9, S16, S17, S19, S27), and writing (S24). In the qualitative study, we observed a number of very rational proposals for upgrading and improving of the existing program directly by students.

c. *The learner factor and the acquisition of the skills*

The learner factor in intensive English Program was also investigated. The items aiming to identify learner factor were the items 2, 4, 9, 15, 16, 18, 20, 33, and 34 in Part A as well as the items that the students were selecting from in Part B of the questionnaire. The analyses revealed that the 2nd item "*My family wants me to learn a foreign language*", 4th item "*I find English courses necessary*" and 9th item "*foreign language learning should continue during the entire college education*" were the most commonly selected. It was also observed that most of the students (4.50) agreed with the statement "*I know the necessity and importance of the English course*" (23rd item) that happens to be the highest selected statement. The second most agreed statement

was *"I believe that if students are willing, they can learn English in every setting"* (4.12) followed by the 17th statement *"a second foreign language besides English should be taught"* (4.29). 20th, 33rd, and 34th items have the lowest frequencies among 34 items. These are *"I attend English courses because it is compulsory (1.68)"*, *"I am reluctant to speak English" (1.57)*, and *"I am trying to pass the course not to learn English (1.83)"*. These three items with the lowest values were inverse items aiming at measuring motivation and therefore the low value implied high motivation.

The B section is designed to further investigate the components of student motivation and in which students were allowed to select from 12 items with possibility of selecting multiple items. The items *"I believe that English is more important in today's conditions"* and *"A good level of English is a requisite to find a good job"* were chosen by the students with the highest frequency among the items with 86% and 82% frequency, respectively. The lowest frequency items were *"because I cannot choose another foreign language" (9%)*, *"because I think it is easier to learn English" (12%)*, *"because it is necessary for internet usage" (20%)*, and *"because it is necessary to follow technological developments" (26%)*. It is noteworthy that the 12th option *"only because the materials used in the advance courses in my profession are in English"* was only 17% of the time marked, although this was the correct reason.

We can confirm the deduction indirectly from the 16th item of section A which indicated a high level of class attendance (4.2 out 5). In the analyses of the qualitative part, we try to infer the self-evaluations of students besides the motivation, and we found that *"difficulty in pronunciation"* and *"fear of making mistakes"* along with *"difficulty at the understanding paragraph or text"* were mentioned as the most important learner related problems in reading activities. In speaking related courses, there were problems of bashfulness, lack of confidence, and worrisome were mentioned as important obstacles for students to acquire this skill. The anxiety raised from worrying about not being able to understand during the listening was also mentioned.

In addition to the questionnaire survey, the interview questions from 32 students were used to have an in depth analysis of the learner based problems and each of the answers was subjected to content analysis. In content analysis, a comprehensive literature review used to compile key words for the strategies needed to acquire each of the key skills in language teaching and how often these strategies were mentioned in the interviews.

One of the skills to acquire while learning the target language is the reading skill. The difficulties that students face while acquiring reading and the strategy they pursue to overcome these difficulties have been evaluated in a similar way. The students who are at the beginning of the language learning encounter difficulties in reading and pronunciation (S8, S13, S17, S20, S22, S23, S28) and struggle understanding the text (S10, S17, S19, S23, S30, S32). In addition, they express that they are unable to find attractive reading materials (S2, S18), have difficulty in reading the first parts (S1), feel anxiety (S6, S27, S32), and find vocabulary very advanced (S19, S28). In addition to the lack of reading material, the language of some texts was noted as heavy (S3). The learner feelings of the text being difficult or above the level is one of the most common problems while gaining reading ability (Ferris&Tagg, 1996 pp297-298; Prowse, 1999

pp120-123; Mclver, 2001 pp117-119; İnal, 2007 p50). Nevertheless, the two common reading related problems (Prowse, 1999 pp120-123); the insufficient motivation and not knowing reading strategies (İnal, 2007 p50) are the two points mentioned the least frequent.

Solutions to the problems encountered by the students in acquiring reading skills have been proposed. Providing the reading materials in the course in advance so that students study (S1) and get ready for lectures (S7) is one of the suggestions. Having students actively read during the class (S6); adding extra reading material in addition to the textbook (S9); increasing the motivation (S14, S25), and correcting the pronunciations during the class (S25, S28) were the other suggestions. In addition, out-of-class reading activities were emphasized extensively (S11, S13, S17, S25, S26, S31) indicating the student concise for the importance of outside class activities.

We also evaluated the activities students conduct to improve their reading skills. It has been observed that the most common activity that students have made are reading books, stories and novels at a comfortable level or increasing the reading volume (Ferris and Tagg, 1996 pp297-298; Prowse, 1999 pp120-123; Mclver, 2001 pp117-119). The selection of original texts frequently referred for reading (Berardo, 2006 pp61-66; Alyousef, 2006 pp66-69) and the number of students mentioned to the possibility of students selecting text was very few (Alyousef, 2006 pp66-69; Mclver, 2001 pp117-119; Prowse, 1999 pp120-123; İnal, 2007 p50). Although vocabulary learning strategies and group work (İnal, 2007 p50) are present and prevalent in the literature, frequency of both was low.

One of the most difficult skills in language teaching is writing skills. The problems students have encountered and the strategies that they used to deal with these problems have been evaluated.

The most common problems encountered while writing were forming sentences (S1), difficulties in writing thoughts (S1, S10), lack of grammar and vocabulary (S7, S13), time limitation (S9), and difficulty in producing a coherent writing body (S12). Some suggestions were presented to the teachers in order to overcome these problems. These suggestions included in class writing practices (S1, S16), increasing writing homework (S3, S8, S13, S14, S16, S17), creating suitable environment for students to write individually (S3), preparing before class (S15), and increasing the class hours for writing lessons (S16). The overall results indicated that students did not devoted extensive efforts to develop this skill outside of the coursework. Only a few learners indicated that they keep a diary, write free paragraphs, or essays (S2, S8, S14, S15, S17, S18, S23, S25, and S26). Although it is mentioned in the literature that the fear of making mistakes in writing affects the writing skills negatively (İnal, 2006 p50), only one student (S21) referred to the issue. In order to make writing more attractive to the students, the choice of the subjects particularly in the context of their life story and experiences are crucial (Bello, 1997 p1, Arkan, 2006 pp2-8). Only a few students indicated awareness of background.

Competence of grammar is the most regarded language skill and most tested in all nationwide central language exams. In the acquisition of this skill, student strategies have been examined and problems encountered by the students were deduced.

One of the most frequent problems that students often encounter during grammar teaching is the quick forgetting of grammar rules and the teaching method used (S5, S7, S13, S19) (Fotos and Ellis, 1991 pp605-628; Erdem ve Çelik, 2011 pp1030-1041) which is usually the traditional method known as the "*grammar-translation method*" (Taylor 1986 pp94-98; Erdem ve Çelik, 2011 pp1030-1041). Some students stated that they have trouble finding resources to study (S10, S11, and S14). It is mentioned that the native language should be used in teaching grammar, especially when difficult structures are explained (S26). Students repeated with insistence (S6, S7, and S13) the compatibility of the grammar instructor that is not emphasized in the literature.

Very few students have mentioned the different styles of learning (Thornbury, 2000 pp3-6; Şirin, 2012 pp59-60). However, students have different methods of grammar study and comprehension. The lack of previous language learning experience (Thornbury, 2000 pp3-6; Sawir, 2005 pp567-580) and tendency to avoid mistakes (Sawir, 2005 pp567-580) are two measures students never mentioned in grammar learning. How to teach grammar rules is a controversial subject in foreign language teaching. However, in order to effectively teach grammar, a method should not get the definition of a rule and then go to everyday example but base from used language and with some intuition arrive at the grammar rule (Erdem and Çelik, 2011 pp1030-1041). Students should receive abundant exercises and the correction of the mistakes while speaking and writing (Erdem ve Çelik, 2011 pp1030-1041).

The last skill acquired in language teaching is vocabulary knowledge. Generally speaking, learners need to develop this skill because of the high number of words needed at academic level.

In the acquisition of vocabulary, it is stated that the students cannot recall the meaning of words or forget the words (Brown and Perry 1991 pp655-670; Lawson and Hogben 1996 pp101-135; Nation 2001 pp47) (S1, S12, S3, S5, S16, S18, S20, and S26). Not being able to use the word learned is another common problem (Nation, 2001pp114-115). This distinct problem in vocabulary is expressed as: "*We have to memorize the words because we cannot speak*" (S6, S16, S17, S18, S20, S21, and S26). Still another problem is that students have limited number of words (Brown and Perry, 1991 pp655-670) (S1). The fact that the books and materials selected for the vocabulary acquisition are not suitable is also seen as another obstacle to reach the target (S7, S27). The lack of recognition of the word in vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2001 p62-63) is common in the literature but not mentioned by students at all. Widespread reading outside the classroom has been discussed in the literature as one of the strategies in vocabulary acquisition (Waring and Nation, 2004 pp97-110).

In order to overcome the problem of forgetting the meaning of the word, the students think that different vocabulary techniques should be taught. It has also been stated that as extra material, books containing opposite meanings and synonyms of

words may be appropriate (S30). Context-free learning of vocabulary is difficult (Lawson and Hogben, 1996 pp101-135) (S21) and hence, some students are acquiring the words by listening to foreign music and watching foreign films (S20).

It has been observed that each student developed a personal technique. Some of them write and memorize the synonyms of unknown words (S2). Some associate words with the objects around and others write and repeat them continuously (S5). Writing words on small papers or cards and learning their pronunciation by using sound dictionaries seems to be a rather common practice (S4, S13, S19, and S22). There are also people who use different coding methods as well as those who use traditional methods to solve puzzles, to read foreign magazines, to write and memorize words in color / paper, to write words in Turkish and to write and draw words. Techniques such as dictionary study, word analysis, reminders, synonyms and phrases, verbal usage are very common techniques to learn new vocabulary in literature (Brown and Perry, 1991 pp655-670; Sökmen, 1997 pp238-258; Shen, 2003 pp187-224) and used here.

Reading extensively improves the vocabulary the most (Krashen, 2004 p6; Cho and Krashen, 1994 pp662-667; Waring and Nation, 2004 pp97-100) but it is the activity ignored by most of the students. Only one of the students stated that s/he applied this technique. One of the methods of acquiring vocabulary that students never mentioned or did not use was to translate interesting passages (Heltai, 1995 pp288-293).

Students, however, argue that despite the fact that they developed personal strategies, there is a need for formal teaching of useful memory techniques during the class. For example, one student (S3) stated that *“The vocabulary class hour is sufficient, but some memory techniques should be applied after the words are worked and taught. Therefore, you can translate, talk, write better with increased knowledge of vocabulary. This will also increase comprehension”*. Similarly another student (S27) remarked that *“I do not think the teacher will do the job of memorizing the words for us. However, I think that it is enough to give a strategy which includes clues about where and how to use the words”*. Another responsibility that falls on this subject is to make assignments and increase the vocabulary of the learners and to hold the students accountable for the vocabulary (S8, S14, S15, S16, and S29). Thus, we can conclude that students often experience problems in vocabulary acquisition and have developed quite different strategies to overcome the problems.

d. The instructor factor

The instructor/teacher is a very crucial aspect of any formal language learning program and the foreign language competence, motivation, inclusion of students, learner-centered lectures, assigning and evaluating tasks related to subject effectively are listed among skills and strategies that are considered important for the teaching factor. The 32nd items in the A section of the questionnaire was related to the teacher and *“are able to acknowledge students about the importance of language learning”* was preferred by an average of 3.08. It has been observed that students associate deficiencies arising from the teaching factor with language teaching inadequacy.

Parallel to abovementioned results, the qualitative study also revealed shortcomings of the instructors and a number of suggestions were proposed to overcome such shortcomings. A student (S6) suggested that *“when the course hour is inadequate, the instructor should provide additional material”* and another one (S9) suggested that *“instructor should be equipped with material beyond the textbook and give them as assignments”* both underlined the use of supplementary materials. Another suggestion was that the instructors should encourage students to read outside of class. For example, one student (S14) stated that *“The teachers do not encourage the student read extra material. However, reading a set of predetermined books as homework could be regularly practiced”*. Similarly, student number 18 noted that *“It should be the responsibility of the teachers to determine the level of student and provide a set of extracurricular books according to the students’ level”*. Another student (S26) commented that *“extra passages for reading outside of the class should be given”* agreeing to the former two students. Student number 10 stated that *“the most common problem in reading is the difficulty of understanding the text and we can get more guidance from our instructors regarding what to read”* emphasizing supporting students about resource selection. *“A better prepared and preplanned instruction”* in the writing class was mentioned (S15). For vocabulary teaching, student number 23 stated that *“materials ensuring memorization of the words and attracting attention are needed”* another student (S30) stated that *“We cannot memorize a lot of words easily. So, instructors can use the books in various subjects that include synonyms and antonyms in classroom as additional materials”* both asserted the importance of techniques and programs and the role of instructor at helping long term memory.

e. Teaching environment, physical problems, and administration

The other set of common factors effecting a successful language education besides the program, learner, and instructor in language education are either physical environment or administrative and management related. The answers to items 19, 21, 25, and 26 in A part of the questionnaire were aiming to evaluate the materials used. The average values observed to be 3.02, 2.71, 3.15, and 2.71, respectively. The average of the answers given to the 24th item about environment and physical conditions was 3.41. The relatively high average value implied that students have concerns regarding necessary environment and classroom conditions for their intensive English program. In the 21st item, students were requested to evaluate the school administration about the overall management of the program and the average value of the answer given to the negatively formed item was 2.71 indicating a successful management. In the qualitative part of the study, physical problems, administrative and management-related proposals were based on the allocation of more resources to mostly in the context of availability of monetary resources for successful students to visit the countries where the target language is spoken (S16, S17). Moreover, better arrangement of classrooms, reduced number of students per classroom, availability of tools and materials, and increasing class hours are mentioned as the most encountered environmental problems in the literature. Opinions about educational materials, which are integral parts of language training programs, focus on textbook and in class materials. The opinions that the grammar book being very detailed and boring (S3), ill-equipped with the lack of interest

in the texts (S26), ineffective (S27, S32) and therefore should be replaced with a better alternative was found noteworthy. The opinion that the speaking courses should be carried out with a small number of students was frequent among the interviewees largely due to the fact that crowded classrooms ultimately cause the sole chance to speak (S3, S5, S7, S13, S14, S16, S17, S25, and S32). The lack of materials used in listening and lack of quality sound system (S7, S24, S28) along with the disconnection between the books and materials used (S7) was also noted. Availability of a computer based interactive environment or the language library (S10, S11) which contains abundant materials for listening (S18) particularly with the subtitles (S26) was also suggested.

f. Conclusions

There is an elevated percentage of population in EU who are compatible with at least one foreign language (Eurobarometer, 2006 pp7-8). However, availability of higher intercultural exchange rate along with the effective teaching strategies have led such a success (Tosun, 2006 pp79-87). With the strategic aim to join EU and increase the integration to the western world, Turkey has a long lasting and intensive foreign language teaching efforts. Concerns regarding efficiency of the current intensive English program across Turkish universities were expressed (Gömleksiz, 2002 pp143-158; Gökdemir, 2005 pp251-264; Tosun, 2006 pp79-87). Based on the recent development and dynamic structure of Turkish universities, it is important re-evaluate the intensive English programs and their efficiency. We used both quantitative and qualitative assessments to comprehensively re-evaluate Kafkas University intensive English program.

We first analyzed the demographic data and observed that the education level, gender and high school graduation did not have any significant effects. Experimental research has been carried out in the context of other variables such as level of proficiency, age, gender and motivation of foreign language learners (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993 pp1-11; Miranda and Umhoefer, 1998 pp39-51; Onwuegbuzie, 2000 pp3-15). In the majority of the studies, the effect of teaching demographic learning strategies to language acquisition was investigated. It has been experimentally shown that foreign language teaching can be done more effectively through the formation of cognitive awareness and it has been tried to be widespread with the definition of "good language learners". However, demographic data were not found to be an important factor in language teaching (El Dib, 2004 pp85-86).

Although students are generally satisfied with the program by responding to the quantitative questionnaire of the survey, suggestions have been made in qualitative studies to further improve the program. The first suggestion in that aspect was increase in the number of class hours. Similar expectations were obtained previously (Gömleksiz, 2002 pp143-158). The other point in respect to the program used was methods applied during the class. In the current study, we observed that students demanded to have a more interactive program via the reduction of grammar teaching

while the proliferation of speaking and listening activities and similar concerns were universal across Turkey as apparent in other studies (Gökdemir, 2005 pp251-264)

In this study, students did not express any serious concern about the teaching factor. However, they did express the belief that there was a need for improvement of the instructor in the writing skills, especially from the pre-preparations point.

The learner factor, which is an important component of the language training program, is the most dynamic factor in Turkish higher education system and intensive English programs across the country. The problems encountered by the students for the six skills required for English language acquisition and the strategies developed by the students for these problems have been analyzed. Lack of out of class personal activities was most prevalent incompetence listed in this study.

Another important factor in language education is environmental factor that collectively includes physical environment, materials, school administration, and management. In the current study, we found that the language learning materials of Kafkas University and physical conditions were regarded inadequate. Moreover, allocation of a higher budget in order to improve the physical conditions was suggested. Furthermore, other studies across Turkey arrived at similar conclusions (Gedikoğlu, 2005 p79; Gökdemir, 2005 pp251-264).

g. Limitations of the Study

This research was carried out with students enrolled in Kafkas University and received intensive English education from Foreign Language School. Therefore, the inference is limited to the gender of the students, the type of the high school they graduated from, the department/university they were enrolled, opinion of the students regarding difficulties in the process of acquiring six different language skills, and their views on how to overcome these difficulties.

h. Suggestions

Based on the findings, we could suggest that instructors involved in language education at universities must take steps to continually improve their skills. Modern teaching techniques and methods should be adopted in the context of newly available online tools and a continuous update should be a routine through academic articles and publications. Since being physically present in the countries where the language is spoken for a certain period and observing the education processes of the same language in various universities is an integral part of a successful instructor, we suggest instructors to take advantage of various programs to visit countries where English is the medium. There is an elevated number of international mobility programs recently available to instructors and comparing performance of instructors before and after attending mobility programs would be an interesting research venue. We found that the lack of motivation was one of the most important obstacles to learn language effectively. Inclusion of more effective tools via mobile devices and video games could be another interesting research topic. Although the modern techniques and tools could be an integral part of the foreign language education, more traditional tools such as day long available language centers equipped with storybooks, novels, and audio equipment

for listening skills where students can work in their spare time are still a need and should be available to students. A future study that measures students' competences using traditional vs. online tools would help to better understand where to devote more efforts.

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