

## ESP needs analysis of Turkish learners of English in architecture

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### Abstract

Needs analysis requires carrying out specific practices to figure out what students' learning needs are. Understanding what learners need promotes auspicious course planning. Needs analysis– a practice in which learners are asked how they perceive their needs– is a step of structuring learner autonomy and awareness. Besides supplying data, needs analysis can embolden learners to think over their learning and impose them responsibility for related course. Phenomenology bears the concept of phenomenon that refers to bringing to light. It aims at interpreting the diverse ways people understand a phenomenon. Based on a phenomenological research design, 53 ESP (English for Specific Purposes) architecture students and two architecture faculty members at a newly founded state university in Turkey were surveyed in order to assess their ESP needs. The findings from the questionnaire with open ended questions unearthed the ESP needs of the informants in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. This study showed that the adult learners of English in architecture department experienced serious problems in particularly production skills– speaking and writing. Thus, language departments and other departments should cooperate so as to make the education of ESP more quality because the participants in the study stated that they needed more quality ESP education.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes, ESP for architecture students, needs analysis.

## İngilizce öğrenen Türk mimarlık bölümü öğrencileri için özel amaçlı İngilizce ihtiyaç analizi

### Öz

İhtiyaç analizi, öğrenim gereksinimlerinin ne olduğunu bulmak için öğrencilerle bir tür uygulama yapmayı gerektirir. Öğrencinin ihtiyaç duyduğu gereksinimleri anlamak, yararlı ders planlamasını da teşvik eder. İhtiyaç analizi öğrencilerin ihtiyaçlarını nasıl algıladıklarını irdeleyen bir uygulamadır. İhtiyaç analizi aynı zamanda öğrenen özerkliğini ve farkındalığını yapılandırma aşamasıdır. Veri sağlamanın yanı sıra, ihtiyaç analizi öğrenenlerin farkındalıklarını ve ilgili derse karşı sorumluluk yüklenmelerini sağlar. Fenomenoloji, beyan etmek yada açığa çıkarmak anlamlarını taşıyan fenomen kavramını taşımaktadır. Aynı zamanda fenomenoloji İnsanların bir fenomeni anlama şekillerini yorumlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Fenomenolojik bir araştırma tasarımına dayanan bu çalışmada İngilizce ihtiyaçlarını değerlendirmek amacıyla Türkiye'de yeni kurulan bir devlet üniversitesinde özel amaçlı İngilizce öğrenen 53 mimarlık öğrencisi ve iki mimarlık fakülte üyesi araştırılmıştır. Açık uçlu sorulara sahip anketten elde edilen bulgular, öğrencilerin İngilizce okuma, yazma, konuşma ve dinleme becerilerindeki ihtiyaçlarını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu çalışma, mimarlık bölümünde İngilizce öğrenenlerin özellikle üretim ve konuşma becerileri ile ilgili ciddi sorunlar yaşadıklarını göstermiştir.

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Bu nedenle, özel amaçlı İngilizce eğitimini daha kaliteli hale getirmek için dil bölümleri ve diğer bölümler işbirliği yapmalıdır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Özel amaçlı İngilizce, mimarlık öğrencileri için özel amaçlı İngilizce, ihtiyaç analizi.

## 1. Introduction

That analyzing or assessing the needs of learners constitutes a significant part of language course designs, whether it is ESP or general English, has been emphasized by a number of researchers (Anthony, 1997; Brown, 2009; Coffey, 1984; Huhta, Vogt, Johnson, & Tulkki, 2013; Songhori, 2008; West, 1994; West, 1997). The merit of needs analysis may keep veiled unless vagueness or inaccuracy in the use of the concept is discarded. It is initially essential to eliminate the unneeded extra terms, secondly to forge diverse ranks of needs, assigning some sort of superiority between them. A related answer is suggested within the rubric of target situation analysis (Masoumpanah & Tahririan, 2013).

Target situation analysis inquires target conditions, gathers and examines data to form the communication that certainly emerges—its roles, patterns, and density, and supplies a ground for choosing the long term goals of the course (Sanmugam, Shah, & Behrang, 2013). Further, peculiar common goals will be set up before the course as a consequence of pedagogic concerns. Their quantity and decency will be led extensively by restraints from the participants involved in the design and employment of the course. The program is observed while being practiced to assure that general goals are still pertinent and achievable (Chambers, 1980).

The research dimension of ESP may be general or to some extent referring to writing more compared to speaking. A reason of this is that in some ESP settings (Sherkatolabbasi & Mahdavi-Zafarghandi, 2012), particularly in EAP (English for academic purposes), rather than spoken genres written ones have been regarded as more pivotal for professional achievement. Another significant reason may be the comfort of written data which can be easily acquired for the analysis. Contrary to the writing genre, basic methodological obstacles of gathering speaking data besides successive transcription may result in complications in research. However, the field of ESP research is fluctuating extensively as a result of the opportunity of speech corpora in which technology has highly simplified the data gathering process. Currently, the required oral data can be gathered in nearly all speaking contexts through even mobile phones which used to be too hard in the past (Hughes et al. 2010). Hossain (2013) defines ESP needs analysis as a field of study that refers to the urgent and particular language needs of learners which are demanded for professional or academic purposes. Moreover, it is an area of query to promote language programs for individuals who are in need of a series of communicative needs (Swales, 1992).

ESP and the communicative approach (Dudley-Evans, 2000) are frequently considered to be related with each other. Yet, the truth is partly different. Most ESP procedures may sound educationally inaccurate in that the real opinions of the participants may be rarely regarded important. Conventional ESP course design bears two main defects: initially, the communicative development of the student is ignored, and next, there is a deficiency in the analysis, as well as in regarding the realities of the ESP settings. In a similar vein, ESP teachers are commonly in a situation in which they have to teach a content that they do not understand. Additionally, in numerous ESP course materials, the students are given a content which lacks a crystal communication focus (Hutchinson & Waters, 1984).

One of the main characteristics of an ESP course is that the content and objectives of the course are guided by the peculiar needs of the learners. Thus, ESP concentrates on the genres and language skills based on particular activities the learners have to do in English (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). Considering the mentioned issue, this phenomenological research analyzed the ESP needs of architecture students at a newly founded state university in Turkey.

### 1.1. English for academic purposes

As a result of the extensive spread of English, ESP and the supplementary field EAP (English for academic purposes) have become progressively significant in recent decades. ESP involves EAP, aviation, architecture, tourism, business, and medical purposes. Both EAP and ESP are different from general English courses since they emphasize the requirement to form and satisfy the needs of every stakeholder including the students by means of choosing the related genres and language items. ESP and EAP courses are briefer and frequently more motivating for students compared to general English courses. Compared to general English courses, ESP and EAP are basically pragmatic, and their research solidly focuses on practice (Wette, 2018). ESP research has a long erratic history (Stevens, 1977).

Since it is dominant in global trade, technology, and science, English highly attracts scholars all around the world. ESP has also gained great popularity for the same reason (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). However, ESP and EAP programs may create some challenges among non-native speakers of English. At this point, needs analysis gets into action (Molle & Prior, 2008). ESP learners within their occupational areas have specific linguistic needs in their groups of practice, the sorts of reports they utilize, as well as their particular discourses (Northcott & Brown, 2006). These needs have to be referred as part of assuring the transfer of ESP courses to the work setting, as Dovey (2006) suggested. Moreover, EAP studies have illuminated that the concept needs can be structured differently: varying from form–function relations (Bhatia, 1993) to one’s being conscious of their rights as a student (Benesch, 2001). EAP studies have also put forward that no needs analysis is the last point since there is a need of constant reassessment (Belcher, 2006).

Besides assuring the disciplinary idiosyncrasy of the instruction, the procedure has to be learner-centered, in that it makes use of students’ professional participation in the subject area of ESP. This practice is a strong motivator for foreign language students (Day & Krzanowski, 2010). The L2 learners’ participation in their specific field for a long while and their desire to work in L2 settings (particularly in Europe) load ESP a crystal assisting value (Peters & Fernández, 2013).

## 2. Methodology

This paper aims at revealing how architecture students and faculty members at a newly founded state university in Turkey perceive the architecture students’ ESP needs and developing implications accordingly. In order to probe the related issue, the study made use of phenomenology– an approach to evidently interpret the third-person’s experiences. Thus, the present study intends to comprehend how the informants perceive the students’ ESP needs.

In a similar vein, this phenomenographic study (Richardson, 1999) investigates the conceptual underpinnings of ESP architecture students and faculty members at a newly founded state university which lacks the required opportunities for a proper ESP course. The data of the study were collected

through a questionnaire with open ended questions adapted from the study of Aliakbari and Boghayeri (2014).

In order to promote the coding reliability of the instrument, Kappa Coefficient for Inter-coder Reliability was counted and it was found out that the coding process was highly reliable ( $K = .886$ ,  $p < .001$ ). ESP architecture students ( $N = 53$ ) and faculty members ( $N = 2$ ) voluntarily participated in the study.

### 2.1. Procedure

The participants were given information about the nature of the study. A pilot study was carried out with five participants to identify the problems that might be encountered in the research process. The participants were told that a study regarding English in architecture department would be performed. They were asked to criticize and reflect upon English education in their departments. A warm-up activity was done with them to be familiar with the topic. In addition, the participants were allowed to ask questions about the study. The researcher answered each question by giving the participants constructive feedback. After the data were collected, the themes were classified and categorized by consulting two experts in the field.

### 3. Findings and results

This section is comprised of the analyzed data related to the parts of the questionnaire. The sub-headings successively include ESP needs related to Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and General Study Skills, as well as semi-structured interview results.

**Table 1.** ESP needs related to Listening Skills

Item	Mean
<b>Architecture students need English to ...</b>	
1. listen to dialogues in general issues	4.62
2. listen to school subjects	4.54
3. listen to presentations in class	4.33
4. listen to media broadcasts in English	4.33
5. listen to daily life directives	3.37
6. listen to friends, colleagues, and anyone related to the occupation	3.32

As can be clearly understood from Table 1, architecture students highly need English to listen to dialogues in general issues ( $\bar{x} = 4.62$ ), school subjects ( $\bar{x} = 4.54$ ), presentations in class ( $\bar{x} = 4.33$ ), and media broadcasts in English ( $\bar{x} = 4.33$ ). On the other hand, they somewhat need English to listen to daily life directives ( $\bar{x} = 3.37$ ) and friends, colleagues, and anyone related to the occupation ( $\bar{x} = 3.32$ ).

**Table 2.** ESP needs related to Speaking Skills

Item	Mean
<b>Architecture students need English to ...</b>	
7. take part in academic speeches	4.67
8. speak in seminars, meetings, and presentations	4.64
9. ask and answer questions in class	4.52
10. ask a question and make a speech in seminars	4.52
11. talk to professionals in real life	4.07
12. speak to friends, colleagues, and anyone related to the occupation	3.69

One can easily comprehend from Table 2 that the informants highly need English to take part in academic speeches ( $\bar{x}= 4.67$ ), to speak in seminars, meetings, and presentations ( $\bar{x}=4.64$ ), to ask and answer questions in class ( $\bar{x}= 4.52$ ), and to ask a question and make a speech in seminars ( $\bar{x}= 4.52$ ). However, they reasonably need English to talk to professionals in real life ( $\bar{x}= 4.07$ ) and to speak to friends, colleagues, and anyone related to the occupation ( $\bar{x}= 3.69$ ).

**Table 3.** ESP needs related to Reading Skills

Item	Mean
<b>Architecture students need English to ...</b>	
13. read architectural texts	4.67
14. read articles in occupational journals	4.66
15. read occupational reports	4.62
16. read newspapers and journals in English	4.58
17. read texts in internet	4.54
18. read architectural study reports	4.52
19. read architectural directives	4.30
20. read the works of diverse architectures	4.20

It is clearly understood from Table 3 that the respondents highly need English to read architectural texts ( $\bar{x}= 4.67$ ), articles in occupational journals ( $\bar{x}= 4.66$ ), occupational reports ( $\bar{x}= 4.62$ ), newspapers and journals in English ( $\bar{x}= 4.58$ ), texts in internet ( $\bar{x}= 4.54$ ), architectural study reports ( $\bar{x}= 4.52$ ), and architectural directives ( $\bar{x}= 4.30$ ). Nevertheless, they reasonably need English to read the works of diverse architectures ( $\bar{x}= 4.20$ ).

**Table 4.** ESP needs related to Writing Skills

Item	Mean
<b>Architecture students need English to ...</b>	
21. write course notes	4.26
22. take notes from course books	4.24
23. write the texts of oral presentations	4.16
24. write term works and projects	4.15
25. write articles for architectural journals	3.81
26. write architectural reports	3.54
27. write architectural case reports	3.50

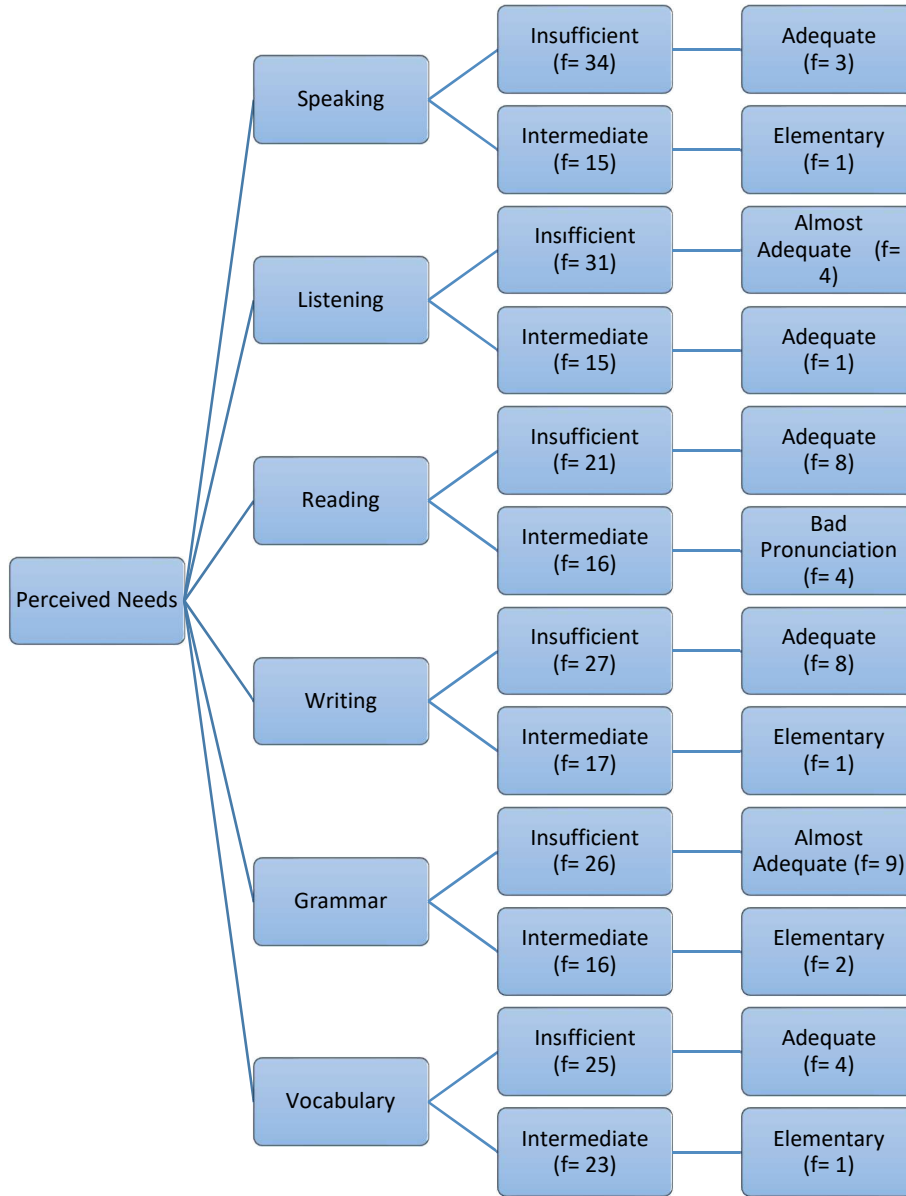
28. write architectural terms and definitions	3.32
29. write architectural directives in the related area	3.30

It is easily understood from Table 4 that the participants reasonably need English to write course notes ( $\bar{x}= 4.26$ ), to take notes from course books ( $\bar{x}= 4.24$ ), to write the texts of oral presentations ( $\bar{x}= 4.16$ ), term works and projects ( $\bar{x}= 4.15$ ), articles for architectural journals ( $\bar{x}= 3.81$ ), architectural reports ( $\bar{x}= 3.54$ ), and architectural case reports ( $\bar{x}= 3.50$ ), howbeit they somewhat write architectural terms and definitions ( $\bar{x}= 3.32$ ) and architectural directives in the related area ( $\bar{x}= 3.30$ ).

**Table 5.** ESP needs related to General Study Skills

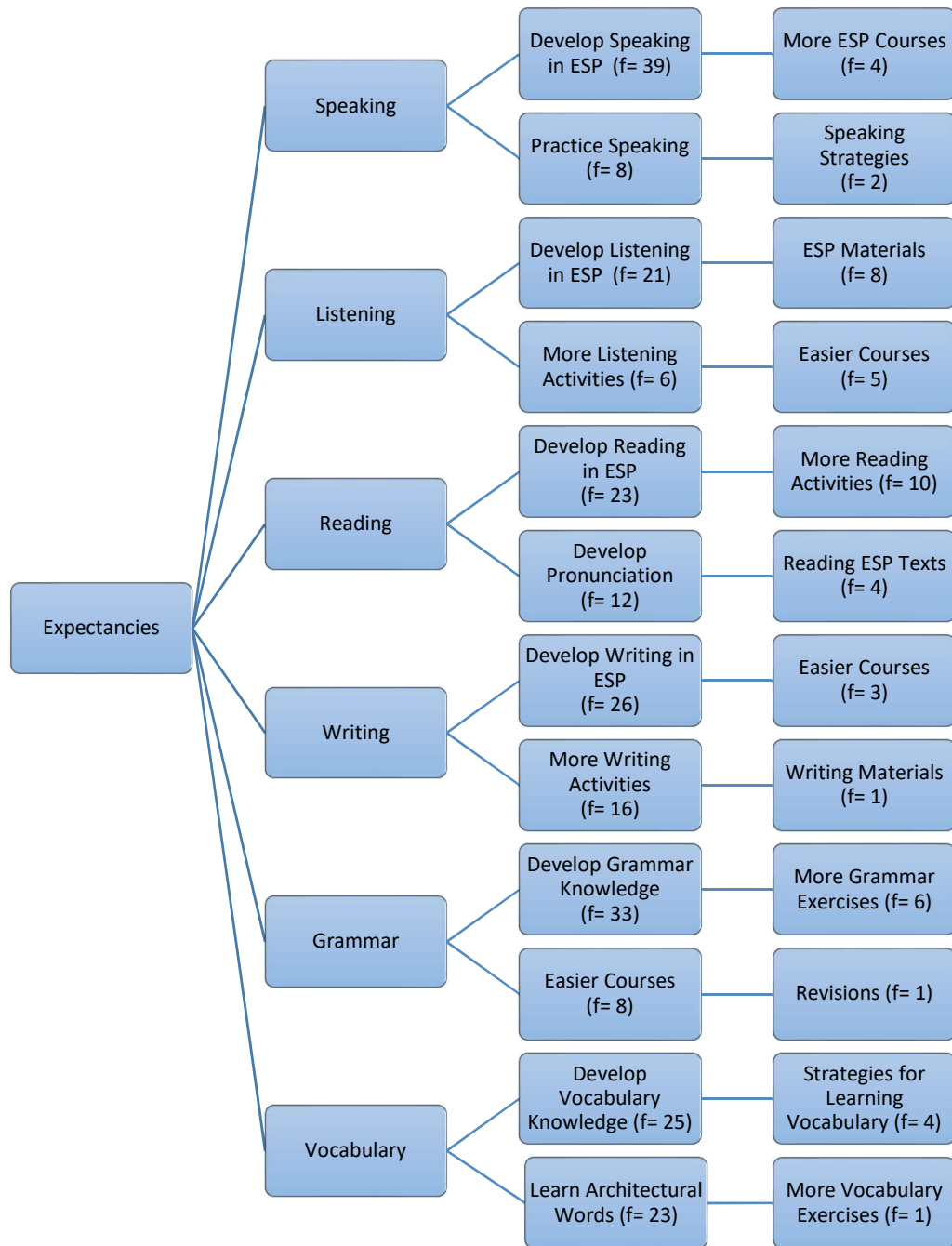
Item	Mean
<b>Architecture students need English to ...</b>	
30. learn basic words	4.81
31. learn semi-technical speeches	4.67
32. learn technical speeches	4.52
33. learn architectural technology	4.41
34. learn new words, synonyms, and paraphrases	4.37
35. learn such technical reading strategies as scanning and skimming	4.32
36. practice architectural words	4.32
37. acquire survival skills in English	4.09

Table 5 simply clarifies that the informants highly need English to learn basic words ( $\bar{x}= 4.81$ ), semi-technical speeches ( $\bar{x}= 4.67$ ), technical speeches ( $\bar{x}= 4.52$ ), architectural technology ( $\bar{x}= 4.41$ ), and new words, synonyms, and paraphrases ( $\bar{x}= 4.37$ ). However, they reasonably learn such technical reading strategies as scanning and skimming ( $\bar{x}= 4.32$ ), to practice architectural words ( $\bar{x}= 4.32$ ), and to acquire survival skills in English ( $\bar{x}= 4.09$ ). The following figure illuminates the perceived ESP needs of Architecture students.



**Figure 1.** Perceived ESP Needs of Architecture Students

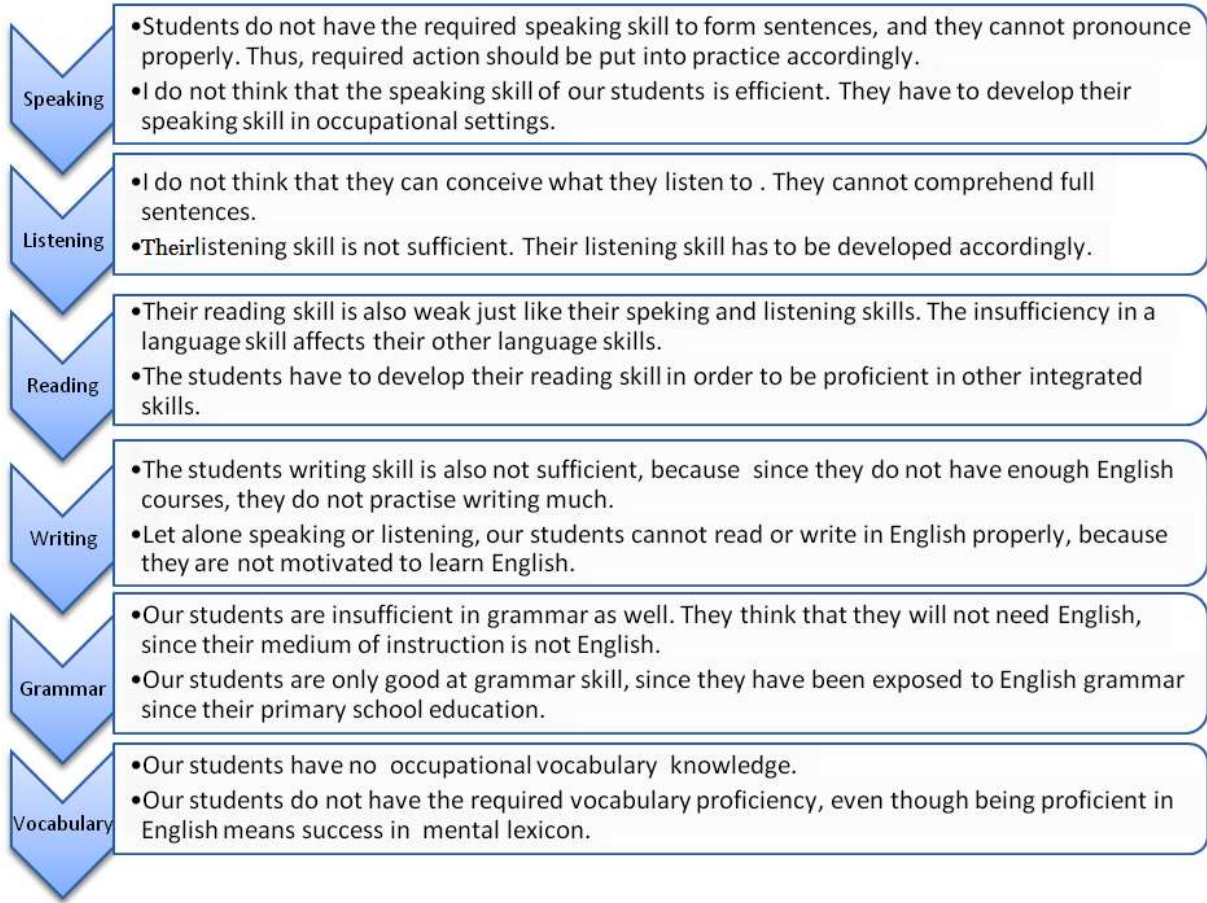
As can be clearly observed from Figure 1, most ESP students are insufficient in speaking ( $f= 34$ ), listening ( $f= 31$ ), reading ( $f= 21$ ), writing ( $f= 27$ ) skills, as well as grammar ( $f= 26$ ) and vocabulary ( $f= 25$ ) knowledge. Further, a number of the informants declare to be in intermediate level in each category. On the other hand, just few respondents state that they are adequate in four language skills, besides grammar and vocabulary. Further, Figure 2 clarifies the expectancies of Turkish learners of English in Architecture ESP courses. In a similar vein, Figure 2 displays what architecture students expect from their ESP courses.



**Figure 2.** Expectancies of Architecture Students from the ESP course

One can easily understand from Figure 2 that majority of the ESP students desire to develop their speaking (f= 39), listening (f= 21), reading (f= 23), and writing (f= 26) skills, as well as pronunciation (f= 12), grammar (f= 33) and vocabulary knowledge (f= 25). Besides, a number of the respondents demands to practice each skills more and to do more related activities to develop their language skills, grammar proficiency, and vocabulary knowledge. The following figure represents the remarks of the faculty members on the related issue.





**Figure 3.** Remarks of Faculty Members on the Language proficiency of ESP students

By looking at the related remarks, it is clearly comprehended from Figure 3 that architecture faculty members (N= 2) conceive that ESP architecture students are insufficient in speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, as well as in vocabulary knowledge. Further, while a faculty member is in the view that their students are sufficient in grammar knowledge; the other thinks just the opposite.

#### 4. Discussion

The results of this study show that the participants aimed to learn English to understand articles and texts in architecture. However, oral skills were perceived as insufficient because they reached only B1 level just like the participants in the study of Shumin (2002). In addition, they received only 3 hours of ESP in the department. Besides this problem, they have difficulty understanding listening because they are hardly exposed to listening which is a problematic skill stated by Ulum (2015). Another problem found in the study is that the lecturers in the department seldom spoke English with them, which is also emphasized in the paper produced by Al Hosni (2014). Therefore, they were unable to receive rich input from the lecturers, which is a big obstacle as stated by Takahashi (2001). The participants also stated that unless they were given sufficient English, it would be better for them to study this major in Turkish. This issue was also put forward in the study of Uys, et al. (2007). Scholars in the related field stress the function of motivation in language learning (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011; Avcı, Kırbaslar, & Şeşen, 2019; Setiyadi, Mahpul, & Wicaksono, 2019). In this study, although the students are motivated to develop

their four skills in English, they have inadequate exposure to English which is also stated in the study of Ranta and Meckelborg (2013).

Gardner, Day, and MacIntyre (1992) clarified integrative motivation, induced anxiety, and language learning in a controlled environment. In a similar vein, the participants in this study have anxiety about using English after graduating from the department. Another problem stated is that the number of the class is composed of 50 students, which made English learning difficult for them. Similarly, Chen and Chang (2004) stated the relationship between foreign language anxiety and learning difficulties. Other studies in Turkey as well refer to similar problems (Yaman, 2018; Aydoğan, 2017; Yazan, 2016; Engin, 2006; Gökdemir, 2005).

Ordem (2017a) notes the fact that it is important to develop critical thinking skills in listening and speaking classes. However, the participants in this study were unable to develop these critical thinking skills because they had problems at basic level such as grammar and vocabulary that caused them not to produce what they wanted in the classroom settings.

The participants had difficulty in producing English prepositions in their writing just like the participants included in the study of Ordem (2019). These findings show that learners feel inadequate while producing the target language at structural and lexical level (Ordem, 2017b, 2019). Another problem stated was responsibility because the learners did not feel responsible about developing English because of the insufficiency of the system in the architecture department (Cesur & Ertaş, 2013).

ESP problem is a deeply-rooted problem because it is often perceived secondary in applied linguistics (Carrell, 1987) although numerous studies have been carried out in this field (Swales, 1980). Needs analysis can refer only to identification of problems (Edquist, 2011). However, it should also suggest practices to solve the related problems. For instance, limiting learners to only 3 hours of ESP may demotivate them (Tashevskaya, 2018). Learners can be more optimistic if they are given more classes about English (Ullmann, 1982).

Learners should be able to produce the target language at advanced level so that they can feel safer while using the target language. Therefore, lecturers and administrators should corroborate and collaborate with learners and take their needs into consideration in a realistic manner (Weiss, Pellegrino, Regan, & Mann, 2015; Basson & Mestry, 2019). In this sense, needs analysis in ESP should address serious problems and solutions in this field (Mohammadi & Mousavi, 2013).

More ESP studies need to be carried out so that learners can be successful in their specific professions (Rahman, 2015). Learners need to be able to speak English dynamically and fluently in ESP and other classes (Feak, 2013). Studying English on superficial level may hinder them from learning the target language at the expected level. Therefore, teaching learners four skills besides grammar and vocabulary can help them acquire the target language, which may help them produce the target language comfortably (Tsou, 2009). If learners are expected to produce the target language, then more realistic solutions need to be found.

## 5. Conclusion

This study showed that the adult learners of English in architecture department experienced serious problems regarding production skills in speaking and writing. They stated that they reached only B1 level, which poses a serious problem for them to understand scientific articles and texts. However, they

have a positive attitude towards acquisition of English. However, the department assigned them only a three-hour English class. We believe that lecturers in the department of architecture should enable learners to be exposed to English more because lack of insufficient input renders English harder for the participants. Future studies should increase the number of English classes so that ESP learners can understand and produce the target language at advanced level. ESP learners should attain at least B2 level in order to feel more secure and comfortable in the target language. In addition, these ESP learners should also develop critical thinking skills through English. Universities and Turkish Council of Higher Education should revise curricula and syllabi. In addition, learners should be involved in the preparation of curriculum and syllabus with lecturers. Otherwise, ESP will continue to remain a serious problem in the future as well. Although Turkey has been making efforts to solve this problem for years, disregarding needs analysis and lack of learners' involvement in the process harden the solution of this problem. Therefore, we believe that it is better to cooperate with learners in preparation of ESP curricula and syllabi. ESP English should be prioritized in non –English departments so that learners can attain advanced level.

## 6. Implications

A number of implications can be stated based on the findings of this study. First, language departments and other departments should cooperate so as to make the education of English more quality because the participants in the study stated that they needed more quality English education. In addition, learners should be consulted about the syllabus of English program because only a three-hour teaching was perceived as insufficient. Besides, departments of architecture and other-related engineering departments can have their own English teachers in the department. Apart from this, Turkish Council of Higher Education can revise the English curriculum of these departments so that they can increase the number of English class hours. Learners should be allowed to express their needs and views regarding English education because learners are more aware of the problems encountered in the curriculum. Faculty lecturers can receive training regarding English language programs so as to understand the importance of English in today's world.

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