

Rethinking EAP Reading Courses: Insights from Student Feedback

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ARTICLE INFO

Received 22.08.2023
Revised form 19.10.2023
Accepted 20.10.2023
Doi 10.31464/jlere.1347794

Keywords:

*English for Academic Purposes
EAP reading course
Qualitative course evaluation
English Language preparatory
programs in higher education
Language program evaluation
Curriculum and instruction*

ABSTRACT

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs are crucial for developing language skills in academic settings, and course evaluation plays a key role in assessing their impact, meeting student needs, and improving the curriculum and instruction. This study evaluates an EAP Reading Course implemented in an English Language Preparatory Program in a Turkish higher education institution, seeking to enhance curriculum and instruction through student feedback. Using a qualitative case study approach, a focus group interview gathered data from a student group at the end of the academic year. Inductive content analysis revealed noteworthy findings in course components like content, materials, technology integration, and duration. This research informs EAP reading course development, curricula, and materials in English Language preparatory programs in higher education, offering insights to enhance similar courses and ultimately improve students' overall educational experiences.

Acknowledgments

This study was presented as a summary paper at the Second Postgraduate Teacher Studies Congress, in Ayvalık, Balıkesir, Türkiye on May 25-27, 2023, and it is an extended and enhanced version of the previous work. I also wish to extend my appreciation to two anonymous reviewers for their valuable and constructive feedback, significantly enhancing the quality of this work.

Statement of Publication Ethics

This study was conducted by following the publication ethics, and the ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University-School of Graduate Studies with the meeting number 10/13 dated 03.08.2023.

Authors' Contribution Rate

If there is more than one author, please indicate clearly the contribution of each author to the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author reports no conflicts of interest.

Reference

Bayraktar Balkır, N. (2023). Rethinking EAP reading courses: Insights from student feedback. *Journal of Language Education and Research, 9(2), 535-550.*

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Introduction

Course evaluation is a valuable instrument that offers a number of benefits. For instance, it provides essential feedback to practitioners by allowing them to reflect upon their teaching and thus helps them enhance the effectiveness of courses and improve their instructional practices. In addition, it contributes to student satisfaction by allowing learners to express their opinions and reveal their needs and thereby promoting a positive learning environment (Zamin & Asraf, 2017). It is also a means for cultivating a culture of continuous improvement in educational institutions. Consequently, course evaluation serves as an essential means to promote the overall impact and quality of a course.

While course evaluation has the potential to provide the aforementioned benefits, most evaluation studies have employed quantitative methods and conducted surveys whose results are interpreted through statistical procedures (see Steyn et al., 2018) and might yield limited insights into determining the efficacy of the courses being evaluated. Similarly, Sozer et al. (2019) state that the structure, administration, and reporting of mid-semester course evaluations play a crucial role in obtaining deep and high quality feedback from students to improve the learning and teaching experience, unlike end-of-semester evaluations that typically use Likert scale-type questions. In this vein, qualitative evaluations that take learners' experiences and perspectives into account might complement the conclusions drawn from the quantitative studies. Indeed, assessments provided by instructors and students are crucial for comprehensive program evaluation reports since they offer more holistic and unique insights that might directly inform the components of the program, making their contributions indispensable as insiders (Tezel, 2021; Zamin & Asraf, 2017).

Literature Review

English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Course Evaluation, and Academic Reading

EAP is a specialized area of English language teaching (ELT) and a subdomain of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that focuses on developing language skills and competencies necessary for individuals to engage in academic or professional activities within an English-medium higher education contexts (Gillett, 2022). According to Bruce (2017), EAP has drawn support from the knowledge base rooted in five research streams: systemic functional linguistics, genre theory, corpus linguistics, academic literacies, and critical EAP. For Hyland (2014), EAP relies on diverse theoretical foundations, including text-based genre analysis, contextual language investigation, and research-based language education. This knowledge base and theoretical foundations inform curriculum and materials development, assessment, and program implementation within the field of teaching EAP.

The primary aim of an EAP course is to support learners in acquiring the necessary linguistic and cultural knowledge, particularly in terms of institutional and disciplinary practices, to effectively study or work in English. EAP courses typically cover the four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as well as the academic discourse of a particular discipline (Hyland, 2006). Additionally, they include the instruction of peculiar

features of academic discourse, such as formal or academic vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and academic conventions, and provide guidance on how to handle and produce these types of texts. Furthermore, developing learners' ability to analyze arguments in both academic genres and texts and approach them with a critical thinking stance is an essential focus of EAP courses. Learner engagement, raising learners' cultural awareness, and technology integration are increasing trends concerning the EAP curriculum and instruction. In sum, EAP courses mainly aim to improve learners' competence and skills to communicate in written and spoken discourse in an academic setting where English is the medium of instruction.

In addition to the main features discussed above, needs assessment, evaluation, and analysis of learner goals and objectives are equally important components of an EAP program (Carkin, 2005). As with any educational program, assessing the impact of an EAP course and learner needs is an invaluable means to enhance the efficacy of the curriculum and instructional methods. In this regard, language program evaluation, "the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to enhance curriculum improvement and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, along with participants' attitudes, within the specific institutional context" (Brown, 1989, p. 223), becomes essential. This definition highlights the two main purposes of evaluation: promoting improvement and assessing impact. In line with these purposes, the process of evaluation can be categorized into two types: formative and summative. Formative evaluation takes place during the program's implementation and focuses on gathering and analyzing data to improve the program. On the other hand, summative evaluation typically occurs at the program's conclusion and aims to determine the degree of success, efficiency, and effectiveness of the program (Brown, 1995). According to Brown and Rodgers (2004), teachers and administrators can conduct course or program evaluations for multiple purposes, such as improving the effectiveness of the course materials, classroom activities, teaching, and learning processes along with many other possible purposes.

Given that this research focuses on the evaluation of an EAP reading course, it is essential to provide a fundamental understanding of reading as a skill. Reading is a multifaceted and intricate skill that defies a thorough definition. Although Grabe and Stoller (2019, p. 5) provide an initial definition of reading as "the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information coherently", they caution against oversimplifying the term due to its inherent complexities. One such complexity stems from the fact that people engage in reading for a range of purposes, including seeking simple information, skimming, learning from texts, integrating information, searching for information to support writing, critically analyzing texts, and achieving overall comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). While some additional factors contribute to the complexity of reading as a skill, for the sake of clarity, it is important to address the fundamental characteristics applicable to reading courses in general. In this context, Grabe (2004, p. 44) highlights ten key implications derived from research on reading, offering valuable guidelines when making decisions related to the design and execution of effective reading instruction:

- ensure fluency in word recognition;
- emphasize the learning of vocabulary;
- activate background knowledge;
- ensure the acquisition of linguistic knowledge and general comprehension;
- teach recognition of text structures and discourse organization;
- promote the development of strategic readers rather than the mechanical application of strategy checklists;
- build reading fluency and rate;
- promote extensive reading;
- develop intrinsic motivation for reading; and
- contribute to a coherent curriculum for student learning.

Reading plays a significant role in academic environments, serving as a fundamental method for acquiring new knowledge, accessing different perspectives, and exploring alternative interpretations. Moreover, reading forms the basis for developing critical thinking skills, fostering the ability to synthesize information, and promoting independent learning (Grabe & Stoller, 2001). Due to the importance of EAP reading, it is crucial to develop reading courses and curricula, make informed decisions regarding instructional methods, and carefully choose or modify materials and resources to ensure the delivery of effective reading instruction in academic contexts.

An Overview of Research on EAP Program/Course Evaluation

There is a growing body of course evaluation research on the assessment of EAP courses from an insider's perspective. Such studies might include practitioners, learners, or other stakeholders as the participants, all of whom might offer extensive data to help assess the impact of any instructional program or course and identify learners' needs and goals to revise and reshape the course components.

Course evaluation studies have yielded various findings obtained from a range of settings and participants. For instance, in a Turkish higher education setting, Üstünel and Kaplan (2015) found that students were in need of developing reading strategies, improving their academic vocabulary, and having more opportunities such as extensive listening and reading, etc. Based on these findings, the researchers suggest that the selection, adaptation, and creation of instructional materials for this course be based on the specific requirements and preferences of the students. In an American higher education setting, Tezel (2021) evaluated a graduate program by including faculty members and students, as the insiders of the program for data collection. The findings revealed that both cohorts expressed positive opinions about the majority of the dimensions directly related to the quality of education provided in the program. Chowdhury and Haider (2012) implemented a needs-based evaluation of the EAP courses for pharmacy students in a private university in Bangladesh. The findings indicated that current EAP courses fall short of meeting learners' needs and transferring acquired language skills effectively for academic and professional contexts. To improve these courses, it is recommended to integrate subject-specific materials and prioritize the development of writing and speaking

skills. These skills are crucial and challenging for students, requiring increased attention and focus. In a similar context to that of the present study, İlerter and Efeoğlu (2021) evaluated an ELT preparatory program in Turkish higher education in a longitudinal study. The results revealed that the program improved students' overall English proficiency, although several components required modifications and enhancements, including teaching four skills in an isolated way, individualized learning, and technical facilities. In a Japanese higher education setting, Lesley (2022) carried out a longitudinal evaluation study on the Extensive Reading (ER) component of an Academic Skills (AS) course that transitioned from onsite to online education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The results indicated that students achieved course goals in both formats, in relation to the course aspects such as word counts, vocabulary testing, reading speeds, and student feedback. However, improvements needed to be made to enhance the quality of discussions, provide a wider range of reading materials, and increase student engagement in the ER Course. In the Malaysian higher education context, Zamin and Asraf (2017) implemented an EAP course evaluation study and found that students exhibited an overall positive attitude towards the course, yet they raised concerns regarding the use of textbooks that were not directly applicable to their specific field of study.

While the studies reviewed above provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and implementation of entire EAP programs in general, there appears to be a paucity of research specifically focused on the evaluation of EAP reading courses. Indeed, in her examination of research in the field of EAP, Pehlivan (2016) stresses that the majority of published studies on EAP primarily concentrate on writing skills. While writing is an essential skill that learners need to acquire and master in their academic pursuits, it is equally imperative to investigate other skills such as reading more extensively and thoroughly to nurture a holistic growth of their academic English proficiency.

Having addressed the significance of course evaluation in an EAP course or program, examined the value of employing a qualitative and insider-focused research approach, and identified the research gap related to the assessment of EAP reading courses, this study aims to evaluate an EAP Reading Course within the English Language Preparatory Program at a Turkish state university. Doing so, it also seeks to ascertain the impact of the course, discover the degree to which it fulfills students' needs, and elicit student recommendations for improving the curriculum and instructional delivery. The following research questions have been formulated in alignment with these objectives:

1. How do students evaluate the effectiveness of the EAP Reading Course?
2. What suggestions do students have for the improvement of the course?

Methodology

Research Design and Publication Ethics

Within the qualitative paradigm that aims to explore individuals' perceptions, understandings, and opinions about a specific phenomenon, this study adopted a case study method. One of the key strengths of the case study method lies in its ability to conduct in-depth investigations of complex issues. This quality makes it particularly appropriate for qualitative research, as it allows for a deeper understanding of particular themes, programs,

policies, organizations, events, and activities that take place in society (Bhatta, 2018). It is also a type of study that takes place within a specific context, gradually developing over time and in real-world settings (Van Lier, 2005).

Furthermore, this research constitutes a program evaluation study that applies Owen's (1999) Interactive and Impact Evaluation Models to assess the course comprehensively. The Interactive Evaluation Model focuses on program improvement by addressing goals, progress, consistency, and effectiveness. On the other hand, the Impact Evaluation Model assesses the program's effects, addressing factors such as adherence, needs achievement, unintended outcomes, and cost-effectiveness. Aligned with the objectives of these evaluation models, the current study aims to facilitate a thorough evaluation and improvement of the course's process and outcomes.

This study was conducted by following the publication ethics, and the ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University-School of Graduate Studies with the meeting number 10/13 dated 03.08.2023. Before the focus group interview, the participants were informed about the purpose, duration, and data collection procedures of the study. Consequently, their informed consent was taken through a written form, and confidentiality was assured.

Context and Participants

The research was implemented at a Western Turkish university, in the English Language Preparatory Program (ELPP) within the School of Foreign Languages. The ELPP comprises two distinct programs based on students' majors: the General English Preparatory Program (GEPP), and the English Language Teaching - English Language and Literature Preparatory Program (ELL-ELT). This study focused on the latter program, which offers intensive yearlong EAP language courses at B2 and C1 levels to students admitted to the departments of English Language Teaching and English Language and Literature. The program offers four core courses: Listening and Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Advanced English Grammar. Its main objective is to equip learners with the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to meet the academic English demands and requirements of their respective departments upon completion of their studies.

The primary objectives of the Reading Course include improving general reading comprehension, facilitating reading fluency and speed, developing effective reading strategies, expanding academic vocabulary knowledge and usage, introducing different discourse structures and organizations, fostering critical thinking through reading, encouraging extensive reading, and increasing familiarity with academic genres. The course consists of four weekly hours dedicated to reading instruction. Formative assessment procedures include two quizzes, two midterms, and a performance grade. Additionally, students are assigned tasks like analyzing academic articles and novels and presenting short stories. The course materials comprise a course book along with supplementary resources. To facilitate the teaching and practice of the course content, a variety of digital tools are employed. Furthermore, a learning management system is utilized for assigning tasks, monitoring progress, sharing additional materials and resources, and maintaining communication with students.

As for the sampling approach, a purposeful and convenient sampling method was preferred as the participants of the study were the students enrolled in the target program,

and the researcher was also actively teaching courses at the research site during the study. Ten female and three male students out of a group of fifteen students volunteered to participate in a focus group interview held at the end of the academic year. The students' age varied between 18 and 21, and they were all native speakers of Turkish.

Data Collection and Analysis

A focus group interview was conducted in Turkish to gather data. Before the interview, the researcher had prepared an interview protocol including open-ended questions related to the course components such as the content, materials and resources, assessment procedures, reading skills and strategies, vocabulary learning, use of technology, the instructor, learner needs, and suggestions for improvement. The questions underwent face and content validity checks conducted by two ELT experts. Following the necessary revisions, the questions were used as a guideline during the interview to steer the discussion. The interview, lasting approximately an hour, was recorded for transcription purposes to facilitate coding and analysis.

Initially, the data obtained from the focus group interview was transcribed, and then an inductive analysis was conducted. The participants' mentions were condensed into meaning units, leading to the identification of patterns, codes, and categories. These categories were further organized into broader themes. To ensure inter-coder reliability, two independent raters analyzed one-third of the data, and Cohen's kappa coefficient was calculated. The coefficient of .73 indicates substantial agreement, as interpreted by Landis and Koch (1977).

Results

The data analysis identified two main themes: students' insights into the Reading Course and students' suggestions for improvement. These findings are presented below, addressing each research question individually. The presentation includes additional categories and exemplar participant responses to provide further context and illustration.

Students' Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the EAP Reading Course

The analysis of the data yielded three broad themes in relation to the students' insights into the EAP Reading Course. The first theme is the strengths of the Reading Course, the second one is the technology-enhanced learning, and the third one is the instructor. The themes, categories, and sample responses are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of the EAP Reading Course

Theme	Category	Exemplar response	Mentioned by
Strengths of the Reading Course	Contribution to skills improvement	The course provided exposure to a variety of sentence structures to enhance writing skills and improve our fluency in both writing and speaking.	P-12
	Preparation for majors	The introduction to academic texts and the analysis of literary works will become beneficial as we start our studies within our respective departments.	P-1

	Content	The content was informative and practical.	P-7
	Critical thinking	In fact, I believe our discussions involved a greater degree of critical thinking than what was typically covered in the Reading Course.	P-5
Technology-enhanced learning	Preference for technology use in learning	Using technological tools makes learning more like a game and thus simplifies the process and makes it more memorable.	P-8
	Quizlet	Practicing the learned words through Quizlet with visual support has been very beneficial.	P-12
Instructor	Professional development	She is open to exploring different approaches for improvement, and I find it valuable that she fosters a supportive learning environment.	P-9
	Accessibility	The instructor was easily accessible.	All Ps

As seen in Table 1, the first theme, strengths of the Reading Course, emerged from categories such as contribution to skills improvement, preparation for majors, content, and critical thinking. One participant (P-5) noted that it significantly contributed to enhancing their general knowledge and vocabulary. Another participant (P-11) stated that the course provided exposure to a variety of sentence structures, improving their writing skills and fluency in both writing and speaking. It also helped them develop their ability to analyze and comprehend texts and promoted the learning of academic equivalents for familiar synonyms (P-8).

In terms of the second category, preparation for majors, the participants found the introduction to academic genres and the analysis of literary works, particularly beneficial. This is reflected in the following response:

“Activities like reviewing articles and analyzing novels are also very helpful, in my opinion. I believe they will be beneficial for us when we join our departments, especially since we have already encountered articles as a form of academic writing.” (P-1)

The course content as the third category in this theme was highly appreciated by the participants. Especially, all the participants agreed on the usefulness of the class discussions about the reading texts covered in the class. Finally, the content topics covered were found informative and practical (P-7).

The last category within the first theme is critical thinking. It was seen that the reading instruction provided opportunities for the students to develop their critical thinking abilities through reading. This is evident from a participant’s response:

“In fact, I believe our discussions involved a greater degree of critical thinking than what was typically covered in the Reading Course. I think you at least have room for it. We have talked more than we can in a reading class.” (P-5)

In relation to the second theme, technology-enhanced learning, the participants expressed a preference for the use of technology in learning, highlighting that using technological tools like Quizlet, Kahoot, and Wordwall made the learning process more enjoyable through gamification and thus making it more straightforward and memorable. The impact of technology on learning was acknowledged, with its accessibility being a significant advantage. Lastly, the use of Quizlet, a digital tool for presentation and practice of target vocabulary items was positively received, as they found it fun and effective in making new words more memorable. Practicing learned words with visual support through Quizlet was also noted as highly beneficial, and they utilized Quizlet sets for vocabulary

practice and exam revision. Quotes highlighting the preference for technology use in learning, particularly Quizlet, are presented below:

“Technology has had a huge impact on the way we learn as it is always readily accessible.” (P-11)

“Using Quizlet is quite fun and makes the new words more memorable.” (P-5)

“We use the Quizlet sets to practice vocabulary and to revise for the exams.” (P-11)

“Since we are constantly surrounded by technology, using it in our learning process can make things easier and more memorable. Gamification also makes our learning even more enjoyable. In my opinion, Quizlet is a much more useful tool than a traditional vocabulary book for improving vocabulary skills.” (P-8).

The third and final theme that emerged from the analysis centers on the instructor. Particularly, two qualities of the instructor were highlighted by the participants: professional development and accessibility. First, the participants observed that the reading instructor demonstrated an openness to professional growth and actively sought students’ perspectives on the course, fostering a supportive and conducive learning environment. This is exemplified in the following participant response:

“I think she is one of the few instructors who is open to exploring different approaches for improvement. I find it valuable that she fosters a supportive learning environment.” (P-9)

The second category pertaining to the instructor is accessibility. The consensus among all participants was evident, as they unanimously agreed that the reading instructor was highly accessible. Several participants expressed their satisfaction with the instructor’s promptness in responding to questions, both during and outside of class. Moreover, they conveyed a sense of comfort in approaching the instructor for inquiries. (P-6, P-11, P-13)

Students’ Suggestions for Improving the Course

The analysis of the interview data revealed one main theme: students’ suggestions for the improvement of the course, with five related categories: materials and resources, reading strategies, course duration, personalization of learning, and topic selection. Table 2 displays information about the findings of the second research question.

Table 2. Students’ Suggestions for the Improvement of the Course

Theme	Category	Exemplar response	Mentioned by
Suggestions	Materials and resources	If the course content included literary works such as poems, short stories or readers, and academic texts related to education, there would be no need to rely mainly on a coursebook.	P-11
	Reading strategies	I feel like we did not spend enough time on reading strategies. We could have given it more attention and made some changes.	P-1
	Course duration	Four hours for the Reading Course is inadequate. For this reason, additional tasks can be assigned for independent work outside of class.	P-10

for improvement	Personalization learning	Suppose that there are several learning methods, and the student chooses the best one that suits their learning style and preferences. Each student's performance is then assessed based on their chosen method.	P-5
	Topic selection	As some topics in the book are about certain scientific and specific subjects, we may not discuss them comfortably. Thus, the topics should be relevant to current issues or subjects about which we can share our opinions easily.	P-13

The findings from the data analysis highlighted several suggestions for improving the course. The first group of suggestions centered on materials and resources. Participants expressed the opinion that incorporating short stories or novels, rather than relying heavily on the course book, would be more beneficial. They also noted that particular readings in the course book were uninteresting and suggested that including short stories, novellas, and poems in the curriculum would be preferable. They recommended assigning additional tasks to encourage extensive reading outside of class. As could be inferred from these suggestions, the participants were in demand of not depending mainly on the course book, but rather of using additional materials and resources like those of literary works and academic articles of their specific interests in and out of class, which could be inferred from the responses below:

“I think it could be more beneficial if we incorporated short stories or readers instead of relying solely on the texts in the course book.” (P-3)

“As some readings were uninteresting, it could be better to cover short stories, novellas, and poems in the curriculum.” (P-5)

“Additional tasks, such as extensive reading outside of class, could be assigned.” (P-10)

Another suggestion put forward by the participants was related to the reading strategies. One participant (P-2) offered that more time could be allocated for discussing and analyzing the reading texts in class. Another participant also noted that the focus on reading strategies was not sufficient, and thus more attention should be directed to the use of reading strategies, which is indicated in the original response:

“I feel like we didn't spend enough time on reading strategies. We could have given it more attention and made some changes. If we had focused more on this aspect, it would have been beneficial for us.” (P-1)

The third category in this theme was the course duration. One participant (P-8) suggested reducing the weekly hour dedicated to the Advanced Grammar Course while increasing the time dedicated to the Reading Course, reasoning that they had been learning and practicing grammar structures since they were in high school; as such, engaging in more reading activities would help them facilitate their reading skills. It was noted by another participant that the current class duration was inadequate, leading to a heavy reliance on the course book. Another participant (P-10) suggested that four hours for the Reading Course were insufficient and recommended assigning additional tasks for independent work outside of class. Only one participant (P-5) felt that the number of hours allocated for the Reading Course on a weekly basis was adequate. Some related quotes

from the participants below reflect these issues clearly: “It would be beneficial to reduce the number of hours dedicated to the Advanced Grammar Course and increase the time dedicated to the Reading Course.” (P-8)

“The class duration is insufficient, and we require more time; that’s why we usually depend heavily on the course book.” (P-13)

The fourth category in this theme was related to the personalization of learning. This category emerged from the observation that the participants pointed out the importance of personalizing the learning process to suit individual learning styles and preferences. They also expressed a preference for being provided with a range of options for vocabulary learning, allowing students to choose the best method for themselves. Two participant responses, for example, reflect this category clearly:

“Suppose that there are several methods for learning, and the student chooses the best one that suits their learning style and preferences. Each student’s performance is then assessed based on their chosen method.” (P-5)

“You know, there are different ways to learn. Instead of assigning grades based solely on one aspect like vocabulary, students should have the responsibility to choose their preferred learning method. It would be beneficial to offer them a few options to select.” (P-8)

Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the impact of the EAP Reading Course from the students’ perspective, highlighting their role as the primary stakeholders in the program. In addition, these findings help the researcher determine learner needs and expectations, which are essential considerations for the future revision and enhancement of the curriculum and instruction.

To start with, regarding the impact of the course, the participants have mainly positive perspectives of the Reading Course on a range of issues. For instance, they acknowledge the several strong aspects of the course, including its contribution to skills improvement, preparation for their majors, the informative course content, and the improvement of critical thinking abilities. More specifically, they are mostly satisfied with the contribution that the course made to the improvement of their general knowledge, academic vocabulary, writing skills, and ability to analyze and comprehend texts. Besides, the extensive exposure to a variety of sentence structures and discourse organizations is perceived to have improved their writing skills and speaking fluency. Furthermore, they recognize the value of being exposed to diverse academic reading genres and engaging in the analysis of literary works, as these aspects are expected to provide benefits during their studies within their respective departments. In addition to their perspectives on the value of the course content as being informative and practical, they appreciate post-reading discussion sessions, stating their positive effect in fostering their ability to think critically. These results imply that most of the specified course objectives have been achieved in the course. To exemplify, improving general reading comprehension, expanding academic vocabulary knowledge and usage, fostering critical thinking through reading, and introducing different discourse structures and organizations are stated course objectives. Hence, the course can be regarded as effective in attaining most of its intended objectives. Although there is not an available study evaluating a tertiary-level EAP Reading Course

similar to the context of this study, the findings that Mutlu (2018) obtained indicate that the Main Course implemented in the English Language Preparatory Program at a Turkish university demonstrates overall effectiveness concerning the core aspects of the course, as reported by both the instructors and students. Similarly, Lesley (2022) states that student feedback regarding the components of an Extensive Reading (ER) course is generally positive. Zamin and Asraf (2017) also report that EAP students in their study have a positive attitude towards the program. However, Chowdhury and Haider (2012) note that EAP courses fall short of meeting the academic and professional language needs and expectations of pharmacy graduates at a Bangladeshi university. They recommend improving effectiveness and motivation and making the course content relevant and interesting.

The second aspect of the course found satisfactory by the participants is the integration of technology into their learning process. They explicitly show a preference for using technological tools in their learning process as they think such tools or applications help gamify learning and make it more memorable. They are especially content with the use of Quizlet, a digital tool allowing the teacher to present the target vocabulary items and provide interactive practice for learners. The tool can be used both as an in-class application and as a self-study resource. Anjaniputra and Salsabila (2018) also report that Quizlet has improved students' engagement and motivation in vocabulary learning at the tertiary level. Similar results have also been attained by other researchers about the benefits of using Quizlet for vocabulary learning (e.g., Dizon, 2016; Sanosi, 2018; Setiawan & Wiedarti, 2020).

The third aspect of the course appreciated by the participants is the course instructor. Two highlighted qualities of the instructor are commitment to professional development and accessibility, with a focus on promptness in responding to students' questions and inquiries.

As for the suggestions provided by the participants, they express a desire to go beyond depending solely on the course book throughout the term. Coinciding with this finding, Üstünel and Kaplan (2015) have discovered that the students hold a negative perception of the course book. To address this issue, they recommend carefully selecting, modifying, and developing instructional materials for the course that cater to the specific needs of the students. Likewise, Zamin and Asraf (2017) point to the necessity of involving reading materials and texts that relate to students' specific fields of study. Another suggestion for improvement is the provision of supplementary materials and resources, such as reading texts from different genres aligned with their personal interests. They also recommend the inclusion of more literary genres like short stories, novellas, and poems, as well as the integration of more digital tools into the course. A similar result has been obtained by Lesley (2022) in that there is a demand for a greater variety of texts to cater to different student preferences. İlerten and Efeoğlu (2021) also identify a lack of individualized learning opportunities in an ELT preparatory program, which calls for more personalized and tailored learning opportunities for students. Finally, the participants of the current study emphasize the importance of focusing on reading strategies more and suggest increasing the weekly hours dedicated to the Reading Course. Fathi and Afzali (2020) aptly suggest that EFL practitioners should integrate reading strategy instruction into their regular classrooms to enhance students' reading performance, ensuring that they

have received proper training on how to teach these strategies effectively. Par (2020) also highlights the importance of teaching students to employ reading strategies as the findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between overall reading strategy use and students' reading achievement.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of an EAP Reading Course offered within the English Language Preparatory Program at a state university in Türkiye. Additionally, the study aims to assess the degree to which students' needs are addressed and to gather student feedback on the content and implementation of the program curriculum. The findings from this study will provide valuable insights for revising and improving the curriculum and instructional approaches employed in the program.

First, regarding the impact of the course, the participants express predominantly positive views on various aspects of the Reading Course. The findings indicate that the EAP Reading Course is effective in achieving its intended goals, with participants recognizing its strengths and benefits, such as the potential of the course to prepare the students for their academic work in their majors, to foster their critical thinking abilities, improve reading skills, and transfer those skills to writing and speaking. In addition, the integration of technology into the learning process is well-received. Finally, the reading instructor is evaluated as being open to professional growth and being accessible to student inquiries and questions.

In addition to identifying the satisfying aspects of the course on the part of the students, they provide valuable suggestions for course improvement. To exemplify, they emphasize the importance of incorporating supplementary materials and resources beyond the course book and the addition of more literary works into the syllabus to make the readings more engaging. They also need a more increased focus on reading strategies and being assigned more extensive reading activities. Finally, they indicate a preference for more personalized learning, giving them a choice for learning methods and selecting reading topics. These suggestions can be seen as a form of needs analysis, highlighting areas that require attention when redesigning future iterations of the EAP Reading Course. Additionally, such learner insights are crucial to be examined as they reflect the potential impact of local, cultural, and educational practices on students' expectations and their overall experiences within the EAP course. Incorporating the participants' feedback will contribute to a more tailored and impactful learning experience in the future.

Based on these results, a couple of recommendations might be provided for future instruction and research. Practitioners teaching EAP reading courses in this research site or elsewhere can benefit from the findings of this study when designing courses and revising curricula and instructional methods. For instance, as inferred from these results the participants believe that a reading class without a book can be effective as long as the materials are selected with care to improve language skills. This calls for teacher training on curriculum and course design so that practitioners can make more informed choices when designing the content, specifying course objectives, selecting or adapting materials and resources, deciding on assessment procedures and instructional methods, integrating technological tools, etc. Likewise, Brown (1995) emphasizes the significance of actively

engaging teachers in the process of curriculum design, as well as the crucial role played by continuous program evaluation that involves both summative and formative assessments. Furthermore, the significance of incorporating training for teaching EAP skills becomes evident. Indeed, Bruce (2017) suggests that while practitioners engage with EAP in higher education, it appears essential to support them through ongoing teacher education both in pre-service and in-service contexts. Instructors are also recommended to be more responsive to learner needs, expectations, and preferences in the learning and teaching process to enhance their learning experiences. Another recommendation might be to integrate technology into the curriculum more comprehensively as it is clearly shown that the current generation is not keen on traditional teaching methods and resources that have been utilized for decades in education and as technology is comparatively more accessible to them and an indispensable part of today's world. As Anjaniputra and Salsabila (2018) put forward, integrating technology into teaching provides an engaging and innovative learning approach that enhances students' overall learning experience and meets the needs of 21st-century learners. Furthermore, practitioners ought to focus on creating an engaging and supportive learning environment, using a variety of pedagogical approaches and tools of educational technology. Finally, yet importantly, they need to make course evaluation an integral and continuous part of their teaching and be willing to take action for improvement.

While this research provides valuable insights into the field of EAP, particularly academic reading, it also possesses certain limitations. Firstly, the qualitative approach taken in the design and implementation of the study and the small sample size typical in case studies hinder the generalizability of the findings. In addition, it would have been beneficial to employ an additional data collection technique, such as observation or learner journals, to complement the existing findings. Next, while the findings of this study might contribute to the growth of course evaluation research regarding EAP reading courses and serve as a model for the design and implementation of similar courses, it is important to note that the results are specific to the institution where the research was conducted. Furthermore, although it might be thought that the researcher's active involvement at the research site may have influenced the results, efforts were made to mitigate this influence by ensuring interrater reliability and being meticulous with the analysis and the discussion of the findings. On a positive note, practitioner research becomes particularly valuable when recognizing the significance of EAP practitioner development (Bruce, 2021).

Future research has the potential to examine the influence of technology-enhanced learning on various dimensions of EAP reading courses, including reading comprehension, reading fluency, critical thinking skills, and academic vocabulary development. In addition, there is a notable lack of course evaluation studies specifically targeting EAP reading skills; hence, more studies investigating EAP reading courses need to be undertaken to fill this gap. Additionally, the research design may encompass multiple sources of data collection and involve various participants. Finally, by conducting regular evaluation studies with diverse methodologies, future researchers can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of EAP reading courses and inform various aspects of program implementation.

In conclusion, course evaluation studies focusing on insiders as primary stakeholders in the learning process might provide valuable benefits and insights as the

findings from similar studies point to a range of student needs, course strengths, and areas of improvement in EAP courses. Freeman and Dobbins (2013) aptly argue that, as educators, we have a responsibility to prioritize the enhancement of the learning experience for students, our own professional development, and the continuous improvement of our courses. To achieve these goals, it is crucial that the evaluation process foster active collaboration between students and educators.

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