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Evaluating the Modular System of Preparatory Class Program

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Abstract

This study attempts to examine modular EFL system of the Foreign Language Preparatory Class at a private university in İzmir and to find out the perceptions of instructors and university students of preparatory class regarding this system. In addition, the purpose of this study is to detect whether the perceptions of students and instructors match the program features. Employing a qualitative and quantitative design, a questionnaire was administered to 132 students and an interview was conducted to 5 instructors in order to determine the value of the program. The study used two main data sources: Instructors and students. The quantitative data collected through a questionnaire was analyzed by using descriptive statistics. However, the qualitative data was examined through content-analysis. The results of the program evaluation indicated that although there are some shortcomings of the modular system, it could be continued by modifying the program in order to produce the desired learning outcomes according to the needs of students.

Keywords: Modular system, language teaching program, program evaluation, perceptions

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Introduction

The significance of foreign language teaching has increased day by day in Turkey as in all other countries. Especially English as lingua franca has attracted considerable interest over years and it has become essential from pre-education to higher education (Coleman, 2006; Corrigan, 2014). English is preferred by some higher education institutions both as a foreign language and as the medium of instruction (Arik & Arik, 2014). Especially, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) has been considerably mentioned as a widespread phenomenon throughout the World (Broggini & Costa, 2017; Soruç & Griffiths, 2017; Zare-ee & Hejazi, 2017).

As long as English gets more important, it is crucial that it should be taught and learnt more effectively (Tunç, 2010). The most significant factor that makes the learning a foreign language requirement for individuals is the country's political and economic situation (Demirel, 1987). As Karakuş (2013) argues "Knowing a foreign language has become not only a necessity to survive in a globalizing world but also an obligation that supports personal development" (p.15). Therefore, the language education policy has been determined by this necessity resulting in changes of foreign language teaching programs. Since it is still argued that students cannot learn English during primary and secondary school, the responsibility to teach English has been given to higher education institutions to teach English with a completely successful programme (Öztürk, 2014). In the context of preparatory schools, there are a few evaluation studies carried out to evaluate the foreign language education system (Akpur, Alcı, & Karataş, 2016; Coşaner, 2013; Çetinavcı & Topkaya, 2012; Demirbilek, 2015; Ekşioğlu & Taşpınar, 2014; Ergunay, Erenoglu & Karataş & Fer, 2009; Gerede, 2005; Kocaman & Balcıoğlu, 2013; Mede & Akyel, 2014; Mede & Uygun, 2014; Özkanal & Hakan, 2010; Tekin, 2015). These studies contributed to the literature in order to fill the gap related to the evaluation of English language teaching. However, the number of studies conducted seems inadequate and new researches are needed.

Due to the strong demand for a successful program, the foreign language preparatory class of the selected university has started to implement modular system in its preparatory classes with the aim of developing its students in terms of all skills appropriately. This study examined this program, the perceptions of students and instructors related to modular system. It is hoped that this evaluative study will serve as a model to evaluate other preparatory class programs in Turkey.

Literature Review

Modular System

Modular system has become one of the most preferred systems recently in order to teach English in not only public but also private schools. According to CEFR (Common European Framework Reference for Languages), language learners are divided into three broad parts that can be divided into six levels: A1–A2 (Basic User), B1–B2 (Independent User), and C1–C2 (Proficient User) (Tannenbaum & Wylie, 2008). Modules are decided according to these levels and the parts of the modules are adjusted so that they can complete each other. "Each module provides knowledge and skills towards proficiency in a field" (Seçilmiş & Ünlüönen, 2009, p.

3). The main features of modular curriculum are learning outcomes such as personal skills and qualities, levels, quality insurance, recording systems and assessment criteria (Ecclestone, 1996). Gömleksiz & Erten (2010) remarked that modular system provides the learners with a rich content, flexible learning- teaching environment, alternative assessment types and progressing smoothly in compliance with their levels.

According to Gömleksiz (2002), there are several benefits of modular system as follows. More flexible learning environment is provided by modular system while students are more active. Similarly, Ecclestone (1996) mentioned that modular system is potentially more flexible than traditional courses which start and finish at the beginning and end of the academic years. Additionally, Gömleksiz (2002) pointed out that students learn at their own pace since modular system gives them the chance of choosing among alternatives and doing self-evaluation. Modular teaching where each student advances according to his/her own learning pace takes individual differences of students into consideration. In line with Gömleksiz's ideas, Özkan (2005) and Öztürk (2015) asserted that the classes are student-centered in modular system, which leads students according to their needs and abilities. In doing so, the students can learn better in his/her own learning pace at the class where the students frequently are assessed during language education. To Karakuş (2013), one of the most distinguishing feature of modular system is grouping the students according to their real levels to progress and individual performance, which shows the importance of assessment and evaluation in the system.

Silver and Bokhorst-Heng (2016) asserted in their book that the students with different abilities can start learning at different levels and progress at diverse rates thanks to modular system which has distinctive features in terms of being student - centered and having interactive approaches. According to them, students have the capacity for several distinctive abilities as means of the modular curriculum which emphasizes especially oral communication and reading skills. In addition, modular system helps teachers to use motivational teaching methods to engage students. Various assessment types play a significant role in teaching and learning to recognize learners' achievements in modular system in which assessment is mainly based on descriptions of the learning outcomes (Ecclestone, 1996). Due to these reasons which affect both instructors and learners; modular system has been adopted widely by state and private universities recently.

Program Evaluation

A significant aspect of educational settings and academe is the educational program evaluation (Salihoglu, 2012). Worthen, Sanders, and Fitzpatrick (1997) described evaluation as "the identification, clarification and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation object's value, quality, utility, effectiveness, or significance in relation to these criteria" (p.5). According to Payne (1994), the roles of evaluation are (1) development of the program in progress, (2) simplification of comparison between competitive programs, (3) promotion of knowledge concerning an efficient program design. Cumming (1988) in her study explains the educational benefits of program evaluation such as confirmation innovations of education, ensuring program development, enlightening viewpoints of learners, expressing an educational rationale and shedding light on social inequalities. Çoşkun (2013) mentioned that since evaluation of current programs contributes to more useful programs, it is vital to implement

evaluation studies regularly. Therefore, evaluation studies should be done as the essential mission of every successful educational program so that necessary changes can be made in order to form a developed program.

Clarificative evaluation, one of the types of program evaluation, helps better policy and program planning and explicit program design. According to Owen (2006, p. 192), clarificative evaluation is concerned with: (a) Analysis and specification of the logic or theory of the programs, (b) establishing the feasibility of program design, (c) encouraging consistency between program design and implementation; and (d) providing a basis for program monitoring or impact evaluation. As Courtney and McCutcheon (2010, p.137) explained “Clarificative evaluation focuses on the internal components of a program rather than the way in which the program is implemented”. Program logic development and accreditation are two basic approaches of this evaluation (Owen & Rogers, 1999). “Problem logic development involves examining available documentation and conducting interviews with relevant stakeholder to construct an overview of what the program is intended to do.” (Courtney, McCutcheon, 2010, p. 137) This type of evaluation may be carried out before the implementation of the program or while the program is operating, which makes it a formative evaluation orientation (English, Cummings & Straton, 2002).

Language education of universities has encountered many chances in order to solve the educational problems and find the best way to teach English. Thus, intensive English programs were provided by preparatory schools at universities. In this respect, it is essential to evaluate the English language teaching programs in Turkey, especially intensive English programs currently offered at university level (Çoşkun, 2013). In this study, ‘clarificative evaluation’ was used in order to evaluate the private university’s modular system of preparatory class and present the strengths and weaknesses of this program from students’ and instructors’ point of view by giving information about the program, conducting interviews and a questionnaire.

Preparatory Class Teaching Program

The Foreign Language Preparatory Class of the private university where this research was held presents a modular system consists of four levels: A1, A2, B1, and B1+ as offered in CEFR. The level groups are determined according to the final scores at the end of the orientation program. The aim of this program is to develop the four skills crucial in language learning (listening, reading, writing and speaking) by integrating a variety of teaching techniques as well as communicative skills to use during future academic studies of students by developing their potentials as critical and autonomous learners. Modular curriculum of the Foreign Language Preparatory Class aims at increasing the level of students’ proficiency needed to advance onto their academic studies at the faculties. The academic year is divided into four quarters, each of them lasting eight weeks. In a module, students meet three different instructors, which means that they are exposed to a variety of teaching styles, accents and personalities. If students are successful in passing a module, they can progress onto the following level. If not, they have to repeat the level. When students can not complete B1+ level by the end of the fourth quarter, a chance is given to them in order to finish the B+ level during summer school. Apart from B1+ level, the other levels are only available during the academic year. Another opportunity for

students to get that they can take exemption exam (the Proficiency exam) at the beginning of the academic year. In the modules, there are mainly main course, grammar, reading & writing, listening & speaking lessons. Students are assessed as follows at the end of the eight - week programme: 10% of participation, 20% of achievement exams, 70 % of placement exam. There are 2 achievement tests in each quarter as well as writing assessment which is a must every week, listening assessment which is small pop up quizzes, and speaking assessment which is an online speaking program. Students have to take the Exit Exam which includes written and oral assessment at the end of each quarter.

Studies based on Modular System

A number of evaluation studies have been conducted in different settings of English language teaching since program evaluation has gained great attention in order to solve the problems in education systems one of which is modular EFL system (Abbasian & AfsharImani, 2012; Çoşkun, 2013; Gömleksiz, 2002; Karakuş, 2013; Öztürk, 2015; Seçilmiş & Ünlüöner, 2009; Üstünlüoğlu, Zazaoglu, Keskin, Sarayköylü & Akdoğan, 2012).

For instance, Öztürk (2015) explored modular EFL curriculum by using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The participants of the study were 5 material and test developers building the curriculum; 5 instructors implementing the curriculum in class; 1530 students. The data was collected through the program document, students' formative assessment grades and proficiency exam results, questionnaires, and interviews. While quantitative data was analyzed by descriptive statistics, and SPSS 18.00, qualitative data was examined by thematic coding. The results indicated that the program had strengths in terms of its being flexible, dynamic, and its reducing minimizing impact on the student dropouts. It was found that modular system which was more effective than the traditional program had a positive impact on students. The findings showed that to improve the program, alternative assessment types, suitable placement tests and modular constructed considering Turkish students' profile were essential.

Çoşkun (2013) conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of the modular general English language teaching preparatory program at a Turkish university by examining students' and English instructors' perceptions of the materials, teaching process, and assessment by collecting qualitative and quantitative data. The questionnaires administered to 381 students and the interviews were done with 22 English instructors were analyzed by Analysis SPSS 15 and content analysis. The findings revealed that the modular system should be changed with a more suitable system considering the number of instructors, classrooms and teaching resources since it had serious defects. Most of the students considered that the materials were sufficient apart from the parts dealing with speaking skills; however, materials were not found suitable by the instructors in terms of the effectiveness. Instructors suggested a detailed needs analysis before the planning of the curriculum for a better teaching process. Both instructors and students found the learning time (6 hours) too much in a day. In terms of the assessment, students were satisfied with the way to be assessed.

Gömleksiz (2002) carried out a study to evaluate modular teaching environment and modular teaching by using quantitative research methodologies. The data was collected via an attitude scale from 280 first year students. The relevant findings showed that the students found English teaching modules useful and benefited from them. According to the students, their self-confidence increased and they learned English better with modular instruction in contrast to traditional method. They also stressed that Learning Resources Center as an advantageous place to study English.

Abbasian and AfsharImani (2012) studied related to teachers-learner' evaluation of modular EFL program. Open-ended questions and questionnaire were distributed to 30 teachers and 200 students attending Translation of Deeds and Documents Course in 2011-2012 and 2012- 2013. The data was analysed by SPSS and document analysis. The analysis of the data yielded that most of the teacher do not think that the modular English language education program matches with criteria of a well-organized language education program. Students and teachers were not found much compatible in their views concerning their own respective roles. It is suggested to reconsider and modify all the aspects of the program as a whole.

Üstünlüoğlu et al., (2012) aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the modular programme by examining the match between what is desired for the programme of School of Foreign Languages versus the actual state of the programme, to decide upon learners' level of skills and knowledge, and to make recommendations for improvement. The study was conducted with participation of 236 freshman students and 48 faculty members from 5 different faculties. A significant relationship was found between students' proficiency scores and perceptions of their own competencies. Additionally, a significant difference was found between perceptions of their own competence in terms of levels at the preparatory program. Although students have difficulty in practicing some tasks requiring higher order thinking skills, faculty members said that modular system of Preparatory School meets the needs of the students.

Karakuş (2013) examined the assessment and evaluation in modular system implementing in foreign language preparatory classes by employing qualitative method. An interview was done with 10 instructors in a state university. Data analysis presented that modular system is useful since it is systematic and it makes students motivated and active as well as instructors due to the change of classes. Assessment types were found sufficient, however, instructors stated that productive skills of student should be enhanced.

Based upon these previous literature studies, there is not a specific consensus among the results that show both positive and negative view related to the modular system. Therefore, this system should be evaluated in different settings so that the programmes could be revised or changed according to the needs of students and benefits of the system. To address the gaps in previous researches, the present study was conducted.

Purpose of evaluation

Considering the relevant literature, evaluation of the modular system to teach English has not been researched much until now. As for the current private university, no extensive program

evaluation of its modular program has been carried out so far although it is thought as problem that some students at preparatory class cannot meet the criteria of their levels even if they pass their current module to progress onto the following level. Since every program should be evaluated in its own context, the current preparatory class needs a program evaluation, too so that it can have the most efficient language teaching program. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to evaluate a CEFR-based modular (A1, A2, B1, B2) English preparatory class program and to determine the perception of students and instructors concerning this modular system in teaching and learning of English at the private university in Turkey and determine whether modular system features match the perceptions of participants.

In the light of the literature review, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions in regard to the existing situation in the field:

- 1) What are the perceptions of instructors related to the modular system?
- 2) What are the perceptions of 1st year students related to the modular system?
- 3) Do the perceptions of students and instructors match the program features?

Methodology

Evaluation Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at a private university in the Western part of Turkey, Izmir. The participants who already completed one year of preparatory class are the students of different departments. There were a total of 132 EFL students between eighteen and twenty four (71 female, 61 male).

To confirm naturalistic validity, the purposeful sampling was done. The students who attend the courses of the researcher were selected in order to conduct the study. Thus, it was the easiest group to conduct the study. Prolonged engagement which is the amount of the time where the evaluator spend time with the participants of the study while building rapport and trust with the immersion of research setting is also necessary for naturalistic validity (Matthews & Kostelis, 2011). Therefore, three instructors were chosen to conduct the interview due to their current teaching at preparatory class and the personal relationship between the instructors and the researcher.

Evaluation Design

This clarificative evaluation was used a mixed method design, where both positivistic and naturalistic designs are employed within the same evaluation context in data collection and analysis to gain more complete and comprehensive understanding of the research problem in this study (Lynch, 1996). In naturalistic design, observation, interviews, journals, and document analysis are the most common methods in order to collect and record data; however, an appropriate test or other instrument for measuring the effect of the program is necessary in a positivistic design (Lynch, 1996). “Multiple data collection methods provide an opportunity to evaluate the extent to which a consistent and coherent picture of the phenomenon emerges”

(Polit & Beck, 2008, p. 543). Therefore, triangulation was done through combining quantitative as well as qualitative research methodologies to make the investigation more effective and deepen the understanding of the perceptions.

Data collection tools

The study used two main data sources: Instructors teaching in modular system and students. The data collection was achieved through (a) interview with instructors teaching in modular system and (b) questionnaire with students. The revised version of the questionnaire that was used by Öztürk (2015) to find out the thoughts of students, in which the responses ranged from one ‘strongly disagree’ to five ‘strongly agree’ was conducted in this study. In the first part, the participants’ personal information was collected. The second part of the scale had 22 statements related to the thoughts of students. The items on the questionnaire assess learners’ perceptions in four subcategories as follows: 1) Program, 2) Material, 4) Teaching, and 5) Assessment. One extra item that asked participants to leave it empty was added to the questionnaire. Besides, an open-ended question that asks about the perception of students related to the suitability of modular system to learn English was added in the first demographic information part. The Turkish version of the questionnaire taken from Öztürk (2015) was translated into English as well by the researcher and a colleague. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the questionnaire is 0.938.

Four instructors were interviewed with standardized open-ended interview format in which the exact wording and order of questions to be asked is determined in advance (Lynch, 1996). The aim of the interview is “gathering naturalistic interview data is to capture the participant’s perspective on the program in their own words” (Lynch, 1996, p. 133). The interview includes some characteristics questions of clarificative evaluation related to the program such as underlying rationale, intended outcomes, the design process of the modular system to obtain in-depth information.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through a questionnaire was statistically computed through SPSS statistical software program by means of descriptive statistics. As for the qualitative data gathered from the interviews, firstly, member-check which refers to “the repeated checking of developing constructions, or evaluation findings, with the members of the evaluation setting who provided the data from” was done via a written text sent to the instructors (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 233-43 cited in Lynch, 1996, p. 57). Later, the answers of the instructors were interpreted conducting content analysis by the researcher and her colleague to reach inter-rater reliability. Content analysis has been defined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) as: “A research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278). Content analysis is essential for the analysis of qualitative data obtained from interviews in this study so that the comparison can be done between the perceptions of instructors and students with regard to modular system and matching of perceptions and program features can be

evaluated. Therefore, thematic categories and topics were identified after the transcription of interviews in the present study.

Findings

In this part of the study, the research questions are answered in the light of the findings that were obtained through SPSS and content analysis.

The perceptions of instructors related to the modular system

Content analysis was carried to find out the instructors perceptions with regard to their language learning. Thematic categories and topics were determined by the researcher and her colleague independently to verify inter reliability. At the end of analyse, a significant degree of similarity was found (85 %). In table 1, main themes, topics and statements are presented. Instructor codes (Ins 1, Ins 2, Ins 3, Ins 4) are also given in order to related the instructors with the themes, topics and statements.

Table 1

The details of instructors' perceptions (N=4)

Themes	Topics	Statements
The rationale of program	Goals (Ins 2)	The aim of the program is to help students realize their educational, personal, social and long-term career. (Ins 2)
	Communication (Ins 2)	Our students need to be communicate with others effectively. (Ins 2)
	Meeting needs (Ins 4, Ins 1)	The rationale is to provide English education according to their level of competence. (Ins 4) Meeting students' academic needs according to their levels is the rationale. (Ins 1)
	Easing process (Ins 3)	The main aim is to ease the process for both teachers and learners since learning is a complex process. (Ins 3)

The outcomes of program	Basic skills (Ins 2, Ins 4)	The outcomes cover the four basic skills in English by demonstrating overall competence. (Ins 2)
		The intended outcome is for the students to pass all four levels of English proficiency as described in CEFR. (Ins 4)
	Success in departments (Ins 3, Ins 1)	To make students be able to survive in their departments is the outcome. (Ins 3)
		It is to bring our students to a level that will enable them to be successful in their departments. (Ins 1)
The design of program	Assessment (Ins 2, Ins 1)	The testing system is very good for both students and educators with respect to the quality of learning. (Ins 2)
		The students undergo various types of assessment. (Ins 1)
	Content revision (Ins 2)	The content is reviewed and revised regularly. (Ins 2)
	Objectives (Ins 2)	There are clear and realistic language learning objectives. (Ins 2)
	Common basis (Ins 4)	It provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guideless. (Ins 4)
	Textbook (Ins 3)	It is designed mainly according to the outcomes of textbooks. (Ins 3)
	Duration (Ins 1)	Modules consist of 8 weeks, getting 28 hours a week. (Ins 1)
Meeting criteria of levels	Fast - paced program (Ins 2, Ins 4, Ins 1)	Students do not meet the level criteria because of shortcoming of the program such as being fast-paced.(Ins 2)
		Students do not meet the level criteria since the modular system may cover the topics intended to be taught very quickly without giving a chance for student to practice enough. (Ins 4)
		Because the problem of modular system is the lack of time that does not provide enough time to apply real-life tasks, students can not meet the level criteria. Our focus on the textbooks and the curriculum are the main reasons for this failure. (Ins 1)

		Students do not do any English related activities out of the class which result in not exposing to the language. (Ins 2)
	Insufficient exposure (Ins 2)	It is hard to say students meet the criteria successfully. The students' lack of motivation, unawareness of the importance of English for their future studies and unconsciousness about learning in general are the main reasons. (Ins 3)
	Lack of motivation (Ins 3)	
Modification	Assessment (Ins 2, Ins 3)	Testing system makes the students tired as they need to reach a certain points to be able to move on to the next module. (Ins 2) We should consider implementing a weekly speaking quiz because the only time the students seem to take speaking seriously is during assessment. (Ins 3)
	Duration (Ins 2, Ins 4, Ins 1)	The program may be longer. (Ins 2) The program should consider the learning pace of the students and be revised accordingly. (Ins 4) Teacher should be given more freedom in class to use the time. (Ins 1) The time allocated for each quarter should be revised to give more opportunity to students in order to practice. (Ins 1)
	Teaching (Ins 2)	The program may be modified so that students can do more extensive activities and are more motivated. (Ins 2)
	Curriculum (Ins 1)	The curriculum should be revised according to the needs and cultural background of the students (Ins 1)
Plausibility	Student - centered (Ins 2)	It is plausible because it is a student - centered program. (Ins 2) Pair and group work activities are conducted successfully in the class with the similar level of students. (Ins 4)

Assessment (Ins 2, Ins 3)	<p>The program tests students' learning constantly which creates more opportunities for students to catch up on their studies and see their progress in a more realistic way compared to traditional methods that test students only at the end of each terms. (Ins 2)</p> <p>The assessment system is a very good one in theory, but after seeing how things went and how students reacted, we can that there are points that need to be revised. (Ins 3)</p>
Materials (Ins 4)	<p>The program is plausible because it considers the students' current level of English and provides different materials to suit their needs. (Ins 4)</p> <p>I think it is unrealistic. Students need at least 2 years to accomplish the required level of English. (Ins 1)</p>
Duration (Ins 1, Ins 3)	<p>Students need more time to reach the goals. (Ins 3)</p>

The perceptions of 1st year students related to the modular system

A descriptive analysis was carried to find out the university students' perceptions with regard to modular system. The mean values of four subcategories of the questionnaire related to modular system are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of four subcategories of the questionnaire related to modular system (N=132)

Subcategories	Mean	Std. Deviation
Material	2.97	.94
Program	3.18	.84
Teaching	3.26	.95
Evaluation & Assessment	3.44	.80

As seen in the table, the students set a high priority on Assessment ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .94$). In this category, "The number of exams were sufficient in the modules" (item 19) had the highest mean value ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.10$) followed by item 17 "The exams in the modules were parallel to the content of lessons" ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.09$) and item 21 "The assessment and evaluation scales were clear and certain" ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.09$). As for the second subcategory, Teaching, students scored high ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .95$) with the item 15 "The

activities in the class made me active" ($M = 3.51, SD = 1.13$) followed by item "The activities in the class aimed at my needs" ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.13$) and item 16 "Homework helped me to program my studying outside the class" ($M = 3.10, SD = 1.19$). The item (5) "My writing skills improved thanks to the program" ($M = 3.72, SD = 1.05$) received high rating in the third subcategory, Program, followed by item 1 "The program was suitable for my learning speed and level" ($M = 3.68, SD = 1.12$) and item 4 "My reading skills improved thanks to the program" ($M = 3.38, SD = 1.03$). The last subcategory, Material, had the lowest mean value ($M = 3.68, SD = 1.12$) with the items 12 which had the highest mean score in the category "The books and materials contributed to my writing skills positively" ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.12$) followed by item 11 "The books and materials contributed to my reading skills positively" ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.07$) and item 3 "My listening skills improved thanks to the program" ($M = 2.95, SD = 1.11$). However, when it is analysed by overall means, item 19, "The number of exams were sufficient in the modules", item 5 "My writing skills improved thanks to the program", item 1 "The program was suitable for my learning speed and level" were most mentioned by the students with the highest mean values of ($M = 3.83, SD = 1.10$; $M = 3.72, SD = 1.05$; $M = 3.68, SD = 1.12$, respectively). Besides, the lowest means scores are of item 2 "The program prepared me for my main department" ($M = 2.46, SD = 1.25$), item 7 "I reached my goals related to language learning at the end of the program" ($M = 2.67, SD = 1.13$), and item 8 "The books and materials motivated me related to language learning" ($M = 2.70, SD = 1.19$).

Compatibility of students and instructors' perceptions related to the program features

In table 3, the features of program, the positive (+) and negative (-) perceptions of instructors and students are presented in order to find out whether the perceptions match the program features. The perceptions of instructors were obtained from the interviews while students' answers were extracted from the open-ended question in the questionnaire.

Table 3

The features of program and perceptions of students and instructors

The features of program	The perceptions of instructors	The perceptions of students
Student-centered	A student - centered program (+)	A student - centered program (+)
Proficiency level-based	Focus on 4 skills (+)	Lack of speaking skills (-)
	Passing 4 skills described in the CEFR (+)	Learning according to levels. (+)
	Lack of speaking skills (-)	Systematic teaching (+)
	Teaching according to the levels. (+)	Suitable program for learning pace (+)
	Suitable program for learning pace (+)	Suitable teaching for levels (+)
		Teaching step by step (+)

		Teaching from an easy to difficult level (+)
		A pressure on students (-)
		Improvement in skills (+)
		Ease learning process (+)
Flexibility	Lack of time (-)	Fast program (-)
	Need of longer time (-)	Limited time (-)
	Fast-paced program (-)	Busy schedule (-)
Different assessment types	Various types of assessment (+)	Sufficient number of exams (+)
	Constant assessment (+)	Too many exams (-)
Rich- context	Different materials (+)	Different information in each module. (+)
	Extensive daily-life activities (-)	Unsuitable books and lesson program (-)
	Possibility of pair and group work activities (+)	No speaking activities (-)
		Insufficient activities (-)
Interactive approach	Lack of motivation (-)	Suitable teaching styles (+)
	Revision of curriculum according to needs, and background (-)	Just grammar teaching (-)
	Lack of practice (-)	Using books extensively (-)
	Insufficient exposure (-)	
Learning outcomes	Not applying real-life tasks (-)	No relationship with departments (-)
	Not meeting the level criteria (-)	Not having perfect skills after finishing modules (-)
	Covering the four basic skills (+)	No learning, just passing modules (+)
		Insufficient speaking skills (-)
		Not having academic English (-)
		Not having enough English (-)
		Based on memorization and theory (-)
		Forgetting things easily (-)

According to the findings, 85 students think that modular system is suitable to learn English while 47 students think the opposite. However, all of the instructors support the modular system to teach English. The findings show that the perceptions of instructors and students match the program features in terms of being student - centered, proficiency-level based, and various assessment types.

As the main feature of modular system (Ecclestone, 1996), various assessment types were also mentioned by the participants. However, too many exams were found negative by

some students. In terms of rich - context of modular system (Gömleksiz & Erten, 2010), while teachers supported that there were different materials that make pair and group works possible but it was not enough for extensive daily-life activities, the students mostly pointed out that the books and materials were unsuitable and there were not enough speaking activities despite different topics in each module.

The findings show that the perceptions of instructors and students match the program features in terms of rich-context in different modules apart from speaking skills. Since they think that speaking is insufficient in the modules, they do not believe in interactive approach of modular system (Silver and Bokhorst-Heng, 2016) as predicted. Instructors consider that the students are not motivated and the program does not let them expose to the language and practice enough due to being fast-paced while students stated that the books are used extensively in the classes to teach grammar instead of speaking.

In terms of learning outcomes, it seems that modular system of preparatory class does not achieve the purpose of the program. According to instructors, the students can not apply real-life tasks and meet the criteria of their levels by covering four basic skills, which contradicts the program features. Besides, the students do not think that modular system prepares them for their current departments academically by adding that they cannot show perfect skills after finishing modules.

Discussion

A questionnaire was administered to 132 students to understand their perceptions related to modular system and analyzed by using descriptive statistics. As the result of the study indicates, from the 4 subcategories, Materials, had the lowest mean value ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.12$). The items 12 “*The books and materials contributed to my writing skills positively*” ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.12$) followed by item 11 “*The books and materials contributed to my reading skills positively*” ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.07$) and item 3 “*My listening skills improved thanks to the program*” ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.11$) showed the perceptions of students related to the books and materials used in modular system. However, the lowest mean value in Materials category is of the item ‘*The books and materials motivated me related to language learning*’ ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.19$). One of the instructor reported related to the students’ not being able to meet the criteria of their levels that “*Our focus on the textbooks and the curriculum are the main reasons for this failure*” (Ins 1). Another instructor suggested a solution to this problem stating “*The program may be modified so that students can do more extensive activities and are more motivated.*” (Ins 2) because the reason of their failure in language learning is seen as the lack of motivation as supported by Ins 3 “*It is hard to say students meet the criteria successfully. The students’ lack of motivation, unawareness of the importance of English for their future studies and unconsciousness about learning in general are the main reasons*”. According to Silver and Bokharsrheng (2016) and Karakuş (2013), modular system motivates student to learn language, however, this finding contradicts the present study and Coşkun’s study (2013) in which instructors argued that the repeating students can cause discipline problems with low motivation because of modular structure hindering teaching-learning process. Taking these into consideration, it can be claimed that the students are not motivated and satisfied with the books

and materials used in modular system, which is in line with Çoşkun (2013) whose study's result showed that both instructors and students thought the materials do not prepare students sufficiently, and they are not academic and suitable to students' profile. It could be estimated that the students do not feel motivated for a busy program after a year of study to take the university entrance exam. Thus, it would be fair to suggest that, new books and materials should be chosen at the preparatory class to motivate students and improve their language skills effectively. Course instructors should use or design materials in a way that can improve oral skills to communicate effectively. Therefore, activities that the students may need in daily life should be integrated into the lessons as well as academic English regarding the needs of students for their success in their undergraduate studies.

The perceptions of four instructors were examined by employing content analysis and six themes have found as follows: *The rationale of program* with the topics 'Goals' (Ins 2), 'Communication' (Ins 2), 'Meeting needs' (Ins 4, Ins 1), 'Easing process' (Ins 3); *the outcomes of program* with the topics 'Basic skills' (Ins 2, Ins 4), 'Success in departments' (Ins 3, Ins 1); *the design of program* with the topics 'Assessment' (Ins 2, Ins 1), 'Content revision' (Ins 2), 'Objectives' (Ins 2), 'Common basis' (Ins 4), 'Textbook' (Ins 3), 'Duration' (Ins 1); *meeting criteria of levels* with the topics 'Fast - paced program' (Ins 2, Ins 4, Ins 1), 'Insufficient exposure' (Ins 2), 'Lack of motivation' (Ins 3); *modification of program* with the topics 'Assessment' (Ins 2), 'Duration' (Ins 2, Ins 4, Ins 1), 'Teaching' (Ins 2), 'Curriculum' (Ins 1); and *plausibility of program* with the topics 'Student – centered' (Ins 2), 'Assessment' (Ins 2, Ins 3), 'Materials' (Ins 4), and 'Duration' (Ins 1, Ins 3).

All of the instructors consider that the students do not meet the criteria of their levels successfully. The reasons of it could be shown as “*Teachers cannot find enough to apply real-life tasks in their classes. The crucial problem in modular system is the lack of time for extra-curricular activities.*” (Ins 1) and “*this is not solely related to short comings of the program itself. The program is very past faced so it is acceptable that some students are left behind; however, most of them simply do not do any English activities out of the classroom. English does not stay with them in their daily lives and become just another lesson they need to pass which results in under-exposure to the language*” (Ins 2). As it can be inferred from the statements of the instructors, students need more activities in modular system in order to develop their English to use in their daily lives for communication. A classroom environment where the learners are exposed to real-life communication by means of authentic activities and meaningful tasks promote oral language (Kayi, 2012). Although modular system is seen as attaching great importance to oral communication according to Silver and Bokharsrheng (2016), in this study the statements related to speaking skills, the books and materials contributed to my reading skills positively ($M = 2.97$), my speaking skills improved thanks to the program ($M = 3.10$) got the lowest mean values among all skills. In fact, the aim of modular system was explained in the vision of the university that the purpose of the curriculum is to equip the learners with crucial linguistic and communicative competence so that students can communicate in English as an integral component in their futures. However, the findings show that the modular system of the university is not sufficient enough to improve students speaking skills. The key evaluation findings of the present study suggest that teaching techniques and activities of the instructors should be revised as well as books to get the students to do speaking

practice as much as possible. Ins 4 stated that “*Pair and group work activities are conducted successfully in the class with the similar level of students*” in modular system while Ins 2 points out “*The program may be modified so that students can do more extensive activities and are more motivated*”, which leads to language production and higher motivation. Taking the importance of speaking to communication into consideration, online speaking sessions that last 30 minutes every week were put in the modular system at the preparatory class. If the duration of these sessions are longer, it could yield a better effect on students.

In the category of Program, the perceptions of students with the item 5 ‘My writing skills improved thanks to the program’ ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.05$) showed with a high mean value that their writing skills has improved more than other skills. The item 5 ‘My writing skills improved thanks to the program’ also scored high mean values. However, the aim of the modular system is improving all language skills equally. “It is important in designing modular programmes to ensure that there is a balance of different types of learning outcomes covered by the overall combination of modules” (Ecclestone, 1996, p. 51). For this reason, the program should be modified to improve other skills as well.

In line with the results of Ertürk’s study (1991), although the item that the students stated with high mean value is that ‘The program was suitable for my learning pace and level’ ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.12$) in each module as the characteristics feature of modular system which groups the students according to their real levels (Karakuş, 2013), the item ‘I reached my goals related to language learning at the end of the program’ had a low mean value. ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.13$). The possible reason could be dissatisfaction of students related to materials and books used in modules to improve their four skills, especially speaking skill as they always wish and repeating a module with low motivation. Apart from that, it can be inferred that, the main goal of the students learn English for the success in their departments after preparatory class education. Besides, as Ins 2 stated, “*Our students need to be communicate with others effectively*”. The outcome of the program mentioned by instructors as follows: “*To make students be able to survive in their departments is the outcome.*” (Ins 3) and “*It is to bring our students to a level that will enable them to be successful in their departments*” (Ins 1). However, it seems that modular system does not meet their needs. For this reason, it is essential to work in cooperation with faculties in order to raise awareness of students with regard to their faculties and expectations of their departments.

Both of the instructors and students think that modular system is student - centered and proficiency-level based (Gömleksiz, 2002; Özkan, 2005; Öztürk, 2015; Seçilmiş & Ünlüönen, 2009). It focuses on the proficiency levels of CEFR and teach English step by step according to the learning pace and levels of students. However, the program is accepted insufficient in terms of improvement of speaking skills by both instructors and students, which does not match the main aim of modular system like ‘flexibility’ feature. Although modular system is known as flexible (Gömleksiz, 2002; Ecclestone, 1996), instructors and students mentioned that it is fast-paced program and they need longer duration for each modules.

The quotes that describe the instructors’ complaints about fast pace of the program as follows:

'Students do not meet the level criteria because of shortcoming of the program such as being fast-paced.' (Ins 2)

'Students do not meet the level criteria since the modular system may cover the topics intended to be taught very quickly without giving a chance for student to practice enough.' (Ins 4)

'Because the problem of modular system is the lack of time that does not provide enough time to apply real-life tasks, students can not meet the level criteria. Our focus on the textbooks and the curriculum are the main reasons for this failure.' (Ins 1)

The reason of students' scoring the item 'I reached my goals related to language learning at the end of the program' low could be this situation. Since they do not have enough to practice as it should be in the class because of fast - paced modular system, they cannot be ready for their departments and reach their aims at the end of the program. The solutions revealed by instructors are that *"The program may be longer."* (Ins 2), *"The program should consider the learning pace of the students and be revised accordingly."* (Ins 4), *"Teacher should be given more freedom in class to use the time."* (Ins 1), and *"The time allocated for each quarter should be revised to give more opportunity to students in order to practice."* (Ins 1)

As another finding worth consideration and echoing those in Öztürk (2015), Assessment dimension of the program had the highest mean value of all ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .80$). The items 'The number of exams were sufficient in the modules' ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.10$) 'The exams in the modules were parallel to the content of lessons' ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.09$) received high ratings in this dimension. It can be inferred from this findings that the students are satisfied with the way of being assessed in the modular system. Likewise, Coskun (2013) found the same results that students in his study were found to be generally satisfied with assessment. In this study, instructors pointed out that *"The testing system is very good for both students and educators with respect to the quality of learning"* (Ins 2) and *"The students undergo various types of assessment"* (Ins 1) as it was supported in the study of Karakus (2013) evaluating modular system. This finding show that the modular program of the preparatory class performs the program specialties as it was asserted by Betts and Smith (1998, p.8) 'Modular programs, which emphasize continuous assessment and therefore, diversity of assessment practices, encourage institutions to move away from the traditional examination which fails to access or assess, in any direct measure, many of the professional skills. Nevertheless, since the improvement of students' speaking skills is not how it is supposed to be, *"We should consider implementing a weekly speaking quiz because the only time the students seem to take speaking seriously is during assessment."* (Ins 3)

Background information of the students should be taken into account while planning the lessons. Ins 1 mentioned that *"The syllabus for each lesson should match with students' needs and cultural background."* which is parallel to the findings in Silver and Bokharsrheng study (2016) which emphasizes "students' background and learning abilities must be considered in designing curricula" (p. 273). Therefore, conscious efforts should be made by instructors and modules should be determined according to the needs and background of the students which could be found out by a needs analysis. According to the results, the perceptions of instructors

and students match the program features in terms of being student - centered, proficiency-level based, and various assessment types.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

In identifying the perceptions of students and instructors in relation to the modular system, the reported findings provided insights for the current program at the school of foreign languages. Additionally, the research sought to explore whether the perceptions of students and instructors match the program features. The data gathered from the questionnaire and interviews revealed that despite the shortcomings of the modular system, it could be modified in order to produce the desired learning outcomes according to the needs of students.

The findings of this study led to some suggestions for future researches. To begin with, there are only a few evaluation studies of modular system of preparatory classes. Hence, further studies should be conducted in other universities as well. A bigger number of participants' size and another preparatory classes of universities to compare might have yielded different or more significant results. Besides, systematic and continuous program evaluation studies should be employed to detect the deficiencies of the program or update the system so that the best language teaching program could be found in order to get the students to be ready for their departments and future career. To collect more detailed data, semi-structured interviews with the students and classroom observations could be done. The curriculum designers and the instructors of material and testing office could be consulted as well. Classroom-based research studies may be conducted to select the most suitable materials and books that motivate students and meet the needs of them.

This study showed that there are both positive and negative remarks of students and instructors concerning modular system to teach English. It is suggested that the program could be improved by selecting appropriate materials, increasing the number of speaking practices and hours of lessons, developing learner outcome, and connecting current practices at preparatory school with the selected departments by students.

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