Full Length Research Paper

The evaluation of Eskisehir Osmangazi University foreign languages department based on instructors' opinions

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This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the English preparatory program based on instructors' opinions at Eskişehir Osmangazi University Foreign Languages Department and to obtain their recommendations concerning how to improve the program. The participants of the study were 27 instructors who taught at the department in 2006-2007 academic year. In this study questionnaire technique containing Likert type questions to get some personal opinions was applied and opinions about the program were obtained via interview technique. The quantitative data was analyzed with frequency and percentage and the qualitative data was analyzed with descriptive analysis techniques. The findings of the study stated that the instructors were content with the program, the program was successful in teaching English and achieving the objectives, the evaluation process was carried out properly and the program met the needs of the students. On the other hand, the instructors also pointed out that the physical conditions of the prep school were not satisfactory and school-based in-service training programs were required for professional development.

Keywords: Foreign Language Teaching, English Preparatory Program, Curriculum Development, Curriculum Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, technological developments are taking place in almost every area. This development and changes bring about cultural changes, too. In this process, mother tongue alone is not enough for communication among individuals, so people feel they have to learn a foreign language (Özdemir, 2006, p. 28; Braine, 2005, p. 13). Foreign languages, especially English, together with expansion of the concept of world citizenship, today are gaining more importance and it has almost become the world's common language (Braine, 2005, p. 13).

English, which has become the most widely used language in almost every area of our age, continues to have an importance as a world-wide language. In our country, English is literally regarded as an equivalent for the term 'foreign language.' Indeed, the majority of university preparatory schools or preparatory programs offer English preparatory education.

Foreign Language Teaching

There are many languages in the world and increasing international relations make it difficult for nations to communicate through only their own mother tongue. Therefore the need for learning languages of other countries is increasing. The number of languages learned as foreign languages is limited. A country's political and economic situation is the most significant one among the factors that makes it a requirement for the individuals from other nations to learn that language as a foreign language (Demirel, 1987, p. 5). Languages of the countries dominating the world in all aspects are learned by people of other nations.

Language teaching can be seen as a kind of problem-solving activity. Just like the social environments it takes place in, language teaching is a phenomenon which is constantly changing and challenging the traditional thinking methods (Widdowson, 1990, pp 2-7). An examination of the historical development of language education in the 20th century shows that the focus of the language teaching approaches are based on changes in

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teaching methods (Richards, 2001, p. 2).

Language teaching is defined as art since it is an activity which can occur as a result of practices performed through very careful observations and patience and requires pretty high a level of skills; and it is defined as science because it includes linguistics which provides scientific information about the language taught and can promote the efficiency of language teaching concept (Demirel, 2003, p. 1). Foreign language teaching can be defined as the process in which a language with other concepts, structure and grammar rules different from mother tongue is taught. The success of the foreign language teaching realized in the school environment is known to be significantly related to the principles applied, because these methods and techniques constitute an entire system designed to transfer grammatical structures and rules processed within a particular context (Widdowson, 1990, p. 190).

Foreign language teaching has experienced many significant changes over the years. The language teaching methods before the 20th century faced the dilemma between an approach focusing on speaking and understanding the language and another approach focusing on the analysis of the language, grammatical rules of the language in other words. After 20th century, different approaches methods and techniques about language teaching were developed. Approach in this context is regarded as the main framework including methods and techniques. While approach is considered as a phenomenon that reflects a particular model in language teaching, method is defined as a series of processes and technique as classroom instrument and efficiency (Celce-Murcia, 1991, pp. 3-5).

It is observed that foreign language teaching is seen as one of the most important issues in our country. It is reported that despite all the effort and investment, the desired level cannot be achieved in foreign language education in Turkey (Işık, 2008). It is also pointed out that students receive a total of 6 years of foreign language education in secondary school and high school, but they still can not be effective and competent in foreign language (Tosun, 2006).There have been studies about what should be done for a more efficient foreign language teaching and some foreign language education policy has gone through some changes. For example, foreign language courses have been put in the programs beginning from primary school fourth grade. Foreign language preparatory programs in secondary education have been abolished and foreign language training has been spread to the entire program (Ministry of Education Regulations, 2006).

The medium of instruction at many universities in our country is English and there is an increase in demand for the universities whose language of instruction is English (Kırkgöz, 2005). Foreign language teaching at universities is generally carried out through preparatory programs and instructors teaching in these programs. All of foundation (private) universities and most of state universities in our country usually offer foreign language preparatory programs lasting for an academic year. After students successfully complete these programs, they continue their education in departments they have been qualified to study at.

Eskişehir Osmangazi University Foreign Languages

Department English Preparatory Program

In universities there are preparatory schools, schools of foreign languages and preparatory departments offering foreign languages education to solve the problem of foreign language in Turkey and to bring individuals up to an adequate level in terms of foreign languages. These preparatory units usually provide one-year education and some have level system. Some of these levels systems make it possible for students to attend the courses in their departments even if it the middle of an academic year, while some others follow entire-year systems requiring that students attend preparatory programs for at least an entire academic year and go to their departments after they prove successful.

Eskişehir Osmangazi University Foreign Languages Department is a unit of the university which offers foreign language education in a preparatory program. Operating as a unit under the authority of the Rector's Office, the department cannot accept all new students for the program due to lack of enough staff; it can directly accept only students of Electrical and Electronics Engineering and Computer Engineering departments for completing English preparatory program is a pre-requirement and there is a quota for other departments.

The aim of the ESOGU English Preparatory Program is to have the students admitted to university's departments with voluntary or compulsory preparatory education acquire a level of English through which they can understand what they read or listen to in their field in English, perform translations into Turkish and to express themselves by speaking or writing (ESOGÜ, 2005).

For 2006-2007 academic year, when the research was conducted, there were a total of 354 students in three different levels of English and 27 instructors in English Preparatory Program. The numbers of the students and instructors according to levels are given in Table 1.

The instructors are responsible preparing and evaluating quizzes, checking and evaluating assignments, preparing questions for midterms and final exam as well as teaching.

Although, Eskişehir Osmangazi University Foreign Languages Department English Preparatory Program has been serving since 1995-1996 academic year, it hasn't been subject to any program evaluation and development process or any study to be conducted into the program's

Table 1. The number of students and instructors according to levels

2006-2007 Academic Year	Number of Students	Number of Instructors
Elementary	190	14
Pre-Intermediate	98	8
Intermediate	66	5
Total	354	27

Table 2. Personal Characteristics of the Instructors Involved in the Research

Characteristic	Group	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	7	25.92
	Female	20	74.08
Graduation from	Anadolu University	9	33.3
	Hacettepe University	9	33.3
	METU	7	25.9
	Uludağ University	1	3.7
	Gazi University	1	3.7
Years worked in the program	0 – 5 years	2	7.41
	6 – 10 years	15	55.56
	11 – 15 years	10	37.04
	16 – 20 years	0	0
	21 – 25 years	0	0
N=27			

purpose, content, learning and teaching process and dimensions of evaluation up to now. It is necessary to determine whether this program meets requirements or not because this program is significant for students' success in the program they are supposed to attend after preparatory education. This study originated from the need to determine the effectiveness of Eskişehir Osmangazi University English Preparatory Program based on instructors' opinions.

Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to determine effectiveness of Eskişehir Osmangazi University English Preparatory Program based on instructors' opinions and to obtain their recommendations concerning how to improve the program. To this end, the answers to these questions were sought:

What do instructors think about
• The importance of English language skills?
• Eskişehir Osmangazi University English Preparatory Program in general?
• The objectives, syllabus, learning-teaching process and evaluation process of Eskişehir Osmangazi University English Preparatory Program?
• The shortcomings of Eskişehir Osmangazi University English Preparatory Program?
• Alternative recommendations concerning how to

improve Eskişehir Osmangazi University English Preparatory Program?

METHODOLOGY

Research Model

This study is a descriptive research conducted to determine the existing status. Research data were collected through survey model using both quantitative and qualitative measurement.

Screening models are research approaches aimed at describing the situations in the past or existing at present. Individuals, objects or events subject to research subjects are described within their own conditions as they already are. The most important consideration here is to make sure that phenomena are observed without trying to change the conditions (Karasar, 2002, p.77).

The study data were obtained through questionnaire and interview form designed by the researcher.

Universe and Sample

The universe of the study comprised instructors of English teaching in Eskişehir Osmangazi University English Preparatory Program. No sampling was done due to the accessibility and reasonable size of the study universe.

Table 2 shows that of the instructors involved in the research 25.92% was male and 74.08 % was female. Out of them, 33.3% were graduates of Anadolu University 33.3% of Hacettepe University, 25.9% of Middle-East Technical University, 3.7% of Uludağ and 3.7% of Gazi University. 7,41% of the instructors had worked in the program for 0-5 years, 55.56% for 6-10 years and 37.04% for 11-15 years. None of them had worked in the program

for more than 16 years.

Data and Collection

The instructors in the English Preparatory Program were interviewed to get the qualitative data for the research and an interview form prepared beforehand was employed at this point for data collection. The first part of the interview form included personal information about the participating instructors, while the second part included semi-structured open-ended questions designed to obtain the instructors' opinions about the program and its dimensions.

Certain principles were taken into consideration while designing an interview form (Yildirim and Simsek 2004, pp.113-118):

• Writing clear-cut questions and preparing experience-based questions,
• Preparing open-ended and not manipulative questions,
• Avoiding questions that might yield multi-dimensional answers,
• Preparing alternative questions
• Writing different types of questions and arranging the questions in a logical way.

While designing the interview form suggestions from the experts were taken into consideration so that the form could be compatible with the aims of the research. Also, two instructors were interviewed as a preliminary test study of the form. At the end of the interview, the responses provided by these two instructors were analyzed with the help from two field experts and it was tested whether the interview questions were clear and easy to understand. As a result of this analysis, some of the unclear questions were revised.

After the questions in the interview form were given their final shape, they were arranged in a way compatible with the aims of the interview and it was decided to ask the instructors these questions in the same order. However, it was decided that a question would be skipped if it was already answered by an instructor in relation to the previous question. It was also agreed that the researcher would try to get clear answers when there was unsatisfactory or unclear answers by asking additional questions like "Is there anything you want to add about this subject?". Finally, it was decided that the interviewed instructors would be provided with additional explanations when they asked so.

All of the interviews were conducted one-to-one by the researcher. Each interview started after the instructor read the interview instructions. The interview questions were asked in the same order for every instructor as arranged in the interview form. During the interviews all of the instructors were called by their names but these names were replaced with false ones for the quotations.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected through the study were analyzed according to the characteristics of the data obtained. Frequency and percentage were used to analyze the quantitative data collected by means of the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire. Level of significance was taken as .05 for the statistical analyses performed in the research. Also, SPSS package program was employed for data analysis (the Statistical Packet for Social Sciences).

The responses given by the instructors in the semi-structured interview were analyzed through descriptive analysis technique and the responses for each question were typed. The obtained data was digitalized and the research findings were interpreted.

Descriptive analysis involves summarizing the data obtained according to the themes determine beforehand and then interpreting them. In descriptive analysis, the participants' opinions are quoted directly so that their ideas are reflected objectively and precisely. As a result of this analysis, the data is presented in an arranged and interpreted form. Descriptive analysis comprises four stages. The first stage is the stage of creating a framework for descriptive analysis. At this stage, a framework was established by taking the research questions, the type of qualitative research method and the conceptual dimension of the research into consideration. At the second stage, how to arrange data in the form of themes according to the framework generated was identified. Data processing was carried out according to the thematic framework. At this stage the data were read, selected for identification purposes and were brought together in a meaningful and logical way. At the third stage, the stage of defining the findings, the data brought together in a meaningful way were clearly defined and supported with direct quotes. At the last stage, interpretation of the findings, described findings were explained associated with some suggestions and interpreted (Yildirim and Simsek 2004, pp.171-172).

While forming a frame including descriptive analysis, recordings of the interviews with the instructors were noted down. At this stage, a separate interview script form was used for each instructor and these forms were numbered. Five out of the interview script forms taken from computer were chosen with unbiased sampling and then a field expert compared voice recordings and interview script forms correcting missing parts in the interview form. After that, the responses for the interview questions were collected under the corresponding questions and adapted to prepare "Interview Coding Key". The reason why interview script forms are organized in this way is that it facilitates designing the "Interview Coding Key" for the researcher and carrying out reliability and validity tests for the researcher and the expert.

While processing the data according to the thematic frame, the data obtained from the interview script forms were read again and arranged. The choices were ordered according to the responses given by all of the instructors interviewed. After these considerations, the themes were written under the corresponding question and "Interview Coding Key" record form was prepared. In the "Interview Coding Key", after the themes reflecting the opinions of all of the instructors were arranged as choices under the corresponding questions, a total of nine instructor interview script were picked with unbiased sampling method in order to determine the reliability of the answer choices. The "Interview Coding Keys" for the nine instructors were multiplied and given to a field expert. The researcher and the expert evaluated the interview script forms and "Interview Coding Keys" independently and coded the appropriate corresponding options in "Interview Coding Keys" for the opinions of instructors interviewed. In order to determine the consistency of the markings performed by the researcher and the expert, answer for each of the questions were determined by analyzing them one by one. After this, "Interview Coding Keys" took their final shapes.

In order to ensure the reliability of the research, "Interview Coding Keys" were multiplied for the nine instructors. The researcher and another expert from the field independently read the interview scripts of the nine instructors and coded the appropriate corresponding choices in "Interview Coding Keys" for the response of each question. After a set of "Interview Coding Keys" was created for each student, the consistency of the "Interview Coding Keys" filled in by the researcher and the expert was compared. After this process, every single response option covering the question item marked by the expert and the researcher was controlled and they were defined as "Agreement" or "Disagreement" among experts. When the researcher and the expert marked the same response option for a question, it was taken as "Agreement" and when they marked different options, it was taken as "Disagreement" and in this case the researcher's choice was taken into consideration.

The reliability of the study was determined by the "Agreement Percentage Formula" quoted by Türnüklü (2000) from Croll (1986, p.152), Robson (1993, s 222), Bakeman and Gottman (1997, p.60).

Table 3. Reliability Percentages of the Questions in "Interview Coding Key"

Questions (%)	Reliability Percentages (%)
Question 3	100
Question 1	90
Question 2	90
Question 4	90
Question 5	90
Question 6	90
Question 7	90
Total	91.42

Table 4. Instructors' Opinions about the Importance of Language Skills

Skills	Very Important		Important		A Little Important		Unimportant		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Listening	21	77.7	6	22.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	27	100
Speaking	22	81.4	5	18.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	27	100
Reading	24	88.8	3	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	27	100
Writing	16	59.2	9	33.3	2	7.4	0	0.0	27	100

$$P = \frac{Na}{NA+Nd} \times 100$$

P: Percentage of Agreement   Na: Number of Agreement
Nd: Number of Disagreement

In Table 3 below, the reliability percentages of the questions in the "Interview Coding Keys" were listed in a descending order beginning with the highest reliability on top and the lowest at bottom.

As can be seen in Table 3, in the reliability study of the "Interview Coding Key," the reliability was calculated as 90% in questions 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Having the highest reliability in the "Interview Coding Key", the reliability of question 3 was calculated as 100%. The average reliability for all of the questions was calculated as is 91.42%.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

This part of the study includes the opinions of the instructors teaching at Eskişehir Osmangazi University English Preparatory Program which were collected through interview technique.

Instructors' Opinions about the Importance of Language Skills

The instructors' responses for the question about the importance of language skills are shown in Table 4. As can be seen in the table, 77.7% of the instructors find listening skill "very important" while

22.2% of them find it "important". On the other hand, none of the instructors find it "a little important" or "unimportant".

As for speaking skill, 81.1% of the instructors find this skill "very important" while 18.5% of them find it "important". None of the instructors, on the other hand, find it "a little important" or "unimportant".

88.8% of the instructors regard reading as "a very important" skill while 11.1% of them find this skill "important". Like the first two skills, no instructor finds this skill "a little important" or "unimportant".

59.2% of the instructors think that writing is "a very important skill", 33.2% find it "important"; only 7.4% find it "a little important" and no instructor thinks this skill is "unimportant".

Instructors' Answers for the Question "What Do You Think about the English Preparatory Program in General?"

In the semi-structured interviews, the instructors were first asked the question "What do you think about the English Preparatory Program in general?" Their answers for this question and the frequency distributions are presented in Table 5.

As you can see in Table 5, 15 instructors think the English Preparatory Program is a successful program; six instructors think the program tries to offer the best level of general English in a busy program; four of them think it tries hard to give all skills; two of them think the program

Table 5. Distribution of the Instructors' Answers for the Question "What Do You Think about the English Preparatory Program in General?"

Instructors' Answers for the Question "What Do You Think about the English Preparatory Program in General?"	f
a. It's a successful program	15
b. It tries to offer the best level of general English in a busy program	6
c. It tries hard to give all skills	4
d. It's exhausting and busy	4
e. It is capable of finding solutions in case of a problem	2
f. Instructors try to have students acquire the language	2
Total of Opinions	33

Table 6. Distribution of the Instructors' Answers for the Question "What Are the Aims of the English Preparatory Program?"

Instructors' Answers for the Question "What Are the Aims of the English Preparatory Program?	f
a. To improve the four core language skills	20
b. To provide knowledge of Basic English	11
c. To have students achieve a level they can follow faculty courses in English	6
d. To have students achieve a level they can do researches in English	3
e. To send students to their faculties well-equipped	2
Total of Opinions	42

is capable of finding solutions in case of a problem and 2 instructors think they try to have students acquire the language.

Four instructors, however, think that the program is exhausting and busy

In addition to the opinions presented in the table, there are some direct quotes from the instructors' statements: What is aimed by these quotes is to support the opinions summarized in the table with quotes and to present some other thoughts and opinions not present in the table. The following are the quotes from the instructors' statements related to their general opinions about the English Preparatory Program.

Among the instructors, Ayşe emphasized that she found the program very good by saying *"I find the Preparatory Program quite good. I sometimes look at other universities and what they do in lessons. Firstly, the program's integrated syllabus is in line with the recent literature. We try to give all the necessary skills. The intensity of the program is arranged according to levels. I believe we are in quite a good level in terms of material use, student motivation or required activities".* (st.374-378)

Umut, on the other hand, found the program successful in general despite some problems by saying *"In my opinion, it is a very successful and reliable program. Of course there are some inefficient points but it is very good in general. Sometimes I even wish the same program were in German and I could take part in it because I find it really serious. The program has some drawbacks but they are not so significant as to harm the system. The facilities are really nice; I mean our activities are student-centered. I find the program very good."* (st.479-483)

Instructors' Answers for the Question "What Are the Aims of the English Preparatory Program?"

As the second question in the semi-structured interviews, the instructors were asked the question "What are the aims of the English Preparatory Program?" Their answers for this question and the frequency distributions are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that 20 instructors think the aim of the program is to improve the four core language skills, 11 of them think it is to provide knowledge of Basic English, six of them think it is to have students achieve a level they can follow faculty courses in English, three of them think it is to have students achieve a level they can do

researches in English and two instructors think the aim of the program is to send students to their faculties well-equipped.

The following statements illustrate these ideas and some of the instructors' ideas.

Ayşe, for example, stated that the aim of the program was to have students acquire all language skills with the following words: "*We try to improve students in all areas, grammar, reading and writing and so on, in a short time. We try to provide the beginner learners with basics and to send them to their departments as well-prepared as possible.*" (st. 11-13)

Fadime explained the aim of the program by saying "*Our aim is to have them achieve a level they can communicate in a foreign language, understand a lesson, write a report, read and comprehend an article in English.*" " (st. 127-130)

Hande, on the other hand complained that the program didn't have clear-cut objectives but still it was aimed at having students achieve a level they can follow faculty courses in English; she said "*I think we don't have clear-cut aims at the moment. However, the ideal aim would be to have students achieve a level they can follow faculty courses in English supposing that they came here as beginners. Pre-Int or higher level students, on the other hand, should go to their departments as well-equipped as possible…*"(st. 1514-1519)

Instructors' Answers for the Question "Does the English Preparatory Program Content Meet Student Needs?"

As the third question in the semi-structured interviews, the instructors were asked the question "Does the English Preparatory Program content meet student needs?" Their answers for this question and the frequency distributions are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 shows that 16 instructors think the content meets students needs, six instructors think the content is effective in realizing the aims, six instructors think the content meets faculties' needs, and two instructors think the content is suitable for providing the knowledge of Basic English.

However, there are some negative answers for this question. 10 instructors think the content is inefficient for students; it should cover technical English as well, three instructors think the content does not meet the needs efficiently and two instructors think the content is incapable of meeting faculties' needs.

Hale pointed out that the content is efficient in general but still students have difficulty about technical English and suggested that the content should cover technical English as well. She said "*…because most of our students are actually students of engineering faculty, we have some problems about technical English. We teach General English and unfortunately we have to. I believe that the level we teach general English is good but that does not mean students will not have any problems about technical English...*" (st. 390-394)

Ümran criticized the former course book used in the program because it covered unnecessary and unrealistic details by saying "*Well, in general I want to say that the course book we used before was communication oriented and personally I believe that it was full of knowledge irrelevant to faculty English. It could have been better if we had thought different things but not that everyday English and useless idioms which they would never really need…*" (st.500-505)

Jale agreed that the program content was efficient but it still lacked some possible activities concerning technical English with the following words "*..yes I believe the program meet needs but we can do something about technical English provided that we reach an agreement with faculties. Apart from that everything seems fine..*" (st. 1452-1455)

Osman pointed out that teaching technical English is not a responsibility of the English Preparatory Program but this situation could be resolved in collaboration with faculties. He said "*Like I said, it is impossible for us to teach English tailored for each individual department. Here we try to teach General English and technical English is not something we can efficiently deal with. But again, in accordance with university senate's regulations, we can come to an agreement with faculties and academic staff from these faculties could undertake this task. What we can teach is General English; if faculties have different demands or if there is a problem about technical English, this can only be solved in collaboration with faculties themselves. I mean this is not something we can achieve on our own.*" (st. 1884-1893)

Instructors' Answers for the Question "Do You Think the Methods, Strategies, Techniques, Equipment and Environment Employed in the English Preparatory Program are Compatible with the Objectives"

As the fourth question in the semi-structured interviews, the instructors were asked the question "Do you think the methods, strategies, techniques, equipment and environment employed in the English Preparatory Program are compatible with the objectives" Their answers for this question and the frequency distributions are presented in Table 8.

As can be seen in Table 8, 27 instructors think the methods, strategies, techniques, equipment are suitable for realizing the objectives, 16 instructors think that the audio materials are suitable for realizing the objectives, 12 of them think that the visual materials are suitable for realizing the objectives, two instructors think the books are suitable for realizing the objectives and two instructors think the methods depend mostly on instructors and so there are different methods.

Table 7. Distribution of the Instructors' Responses for the Question "Does the English Preparatory Program Content Meet Student

Instructors' Answers for the Question "Does the English Preparatory Program Content Meet Student Needs?"	f
Positive Opinions	
a. The content meets students needs	16
b. The content is effective in realizing the aims	6
c. The content meets faculties' needs	6
d. The content is suitable for providing the knowledge of Basic English	2
Total of opinions	30
Negative Opinions	
The content is inefficient for students; it should cover technical English as well	10
b. The content does not meet the needs efficiently	3
c. The content is incapable of meeting faculties' needs	2
Total of opinions	15

Table 8. Distribution of Instructors' Answers for the Question "Do You Think the Methods, Strategies, Techniques, Equipment and Environment Employed in the English Preparatory Program are Compatible with the Objectives"

Instructors' Answers for the Question "Do You Think the Methods, Strategies, Techniques, Equipment and Environment Employed in the English Preparatory Program are Compatible with the Objectives"	f
Positive Opinions	
a.The methods, strategies, techniques, equipment are suitable for realizing the objectives	27
b. The audio materials are suitable for realizing the objectives	16
c. The visual materials are suitable for realizing the objectives	12
d. The books are suitable for realizing the objectives	2
e. The methods depend mostly on instructors: there are different methods	2
Total of Opinions	59
Negative opinions	
a. The environment is not suitable for realizing the objectives	4
b. There are problems in realizing the objectives because students do not find the learning environment interesting	
Total of Opinions	6

On the other hand, there are some negative opinions about the compatibility of the methods, strategies, techniques, equipment and environment employed in the English Preparatory Program for realizing the objectives. Four instructors think the environment is not suitable for realizing the objectives and two instructors think that there are problems in realizing the objectives because students do not find the learning environment interesting.

Nadya stated that the materials and environment are suitable for realizing the objectives. She said *"Especially the number of students in each classroom creates an environment making it possible for students to establishing a communication with each other and with us. We make sure that they use the target language, English, while they are communicating, which is great. The new audio system lets our students to be exposed to*

target language directly. I believe video classes are also useful for students." (st. 1895-1901)

Nilgün pointed out that methods and techniques depend more on instructors, that the learning environment is not a convenient one, technological developments in school equipment are useful and that instructors are supposed to improve themselves. She said *"We have some deficiencies particularly in terms of physical qualities of the learning environment. To begin with, because the prep-school building here is not located in the main campus and other conditions of the classrooms – those columns in the middle of rooms, for example – make students feel they are somewhere but not a university. Use of portable music players (mp3 players), for instance, made things much easier and enhanced teaching listening. I believe the better physical conditions we have, the more motivated both students and instructors feel. In a national exam last weekend, we took part as exam attendants in a primary school. Although it was just a primary school, their classrooms were very modern and well-equipped unlike ours. I strongly believe that we can't provide our students with necessary physical conditions, which makes them feel bad…And about methods and techniques, I think they depend completely on instructors. Instructors should always improve themselves professionally. In-service training sessions or seminars might be a good idea. Of course, people should be willing about participating in these activities. You know, people are not always keen on this sort of things even if these activities do not take long. If people start to see these activities as a normal part of teaching profession, then they may really be beneficial. And as for our course-books, our books tend to focus on communication skills such as listening and speaking, which requires warm-up activities be designed really well. Warm-up activities are supposed to prepare students as much as possible for a lesson … for what is planned to be learned in that lesson, grammar points or reading skills. Well… I have doubts right at this point. I mean everybody knows some people here do not do their best about it. Therefore, I feel it is sometimes the teacher that matters not the course-book used, so our instructors should always improve their professional knowledge and skills."* (st. 1453-1470)

Instructors' Answers to the Question "To What Extent Do You Think Assessment Types and Tools Employed in the English Preparatory Program Are Effective in Realizing the Objectives?"

As the fifth question in the semi-structured interviews, the instructors were asked the question "To what extent do you think assessment types and tools employed in the English Preparatory Program are effective in realizing the objectives?" The instructors' answers to this question and the frequency distributions are shown in Table 9.

As presented in Table 9, 19 instructors think the assessment types are suitable for realizing the objectives, 8 instructors think the exams are functional, 8 instructors think the content and exams are consistent with each other, 4 instructors think the quizzes prepare students for the midterms and 2 instructors think the exams are helpful in monitoring student improvement.

Apart from the positive opinions mentioned above, five instructors think there is sometimes inconsistency between what is taught and what is assessed.

Emre stated that the assessment tools used in the preparatory program are appropriate and teachers could easily monitor student process through them but also pointed out that what mattered was actually students' inner motivation. He said *"What is done for assessment here is quite satisfactory because I believe we assess students in ways as much and varied ways as possible. E-portfolios and quizzes are the quickest ways and we also have midterms and assignments for long-terms assessments. The timing of these types is well-arranged and students are aware of the fact that they are being monitored. If students themselves have inner motivation, this situation may turn out to be an advantage for them. However, if students are not highly motivated all these assessment types may be a torture for them."* (st. 1653-1664)

Sati pointed out that assessment process requires expertise and needs to be performed by experts by saying *"We are conducting researches to have an idea about this subject; for example, I have a research about this subject. In my opinion, the assessments carried out in English teaching process should be conducted in a professional way because our objectives should professionally reach beyond traditional ones. As you know measurement-and-evaluation is a field that requires expertise, so it should be carried out by experts. I strongly believe this will certainly contribute to both teaching-learning and assessment processes."* (st. 2203-2210)

Münevver, on the other hand, thinks that the preparatory program conducts an accurate measurement to a great extent despite some in efficiencies, which triggered student failure. She said *"I feel most of our activities of assessment are accurate but unfortunately there have been wrong practices. In my opinion, measuring grammar, for example, was inefficient because we tried to test more than what we taught and this led to students' underachievement."* (st. 2217-2225)

Instructors' Answers to the Question "What Do You Think about the Deficiencies of the English Preparatory Program?"

As the sixth question in the semi-structured interviews, the instructors were asked the question "What do you think about the deficiencies of the English Preparatory Program?" The instructors' answers to this question and

Table 9. Distribution of the Instructors' Answers to the Question "To What Extent Do You Think Assessment Types and Tools Employed in the English Preparatory Program Are Effective in Realizing the Objectives?"

Instructors' Answers to the Question "To What Extent Do You Think Assessment Types and Tools Employed in the English Preparatory Program Are Effective in Realizing the Objectives?"	f
a. The assessment types are suitable for realizing the objectives	19
b. The exams are functional	8
c. The content and exams are consistent with each other	8
d. There is sometimes inconsistency between what is taught and what is assessed	5
e. The quizzes prepare students for the midterms	4
f. The exams are helpful in monitoring student improvement	2
Total of Opinions	46

Table 10. Distribution of the Instructors' Answers to the question "What do you think about the deficiencies of the English Preparatory Program?"

Instructors' Answers to the question "What do you think about thedeficiencies of the English Preparatory Program?"	f
a. There are physical deficiencies caused by the prep-school building	11
b. There are some deficiencies about in-service training	7
c. The program is inadequate at some points	6
d. Time allowed for the program is not enough	5
e. Having beginner learners is a problem	4
f. The objectives are not clear	3
g. I don't think there are any deficiencies	3
h. There are some problems for different types of students (voluntary or obligatory)	3
i. Motivation level is low.	2
Total of Opinions	44

the frequency distributions are shown in Table 10.

As can be seen in Table 10, 11 instructors think there are physical deficiencies caused by the prep-school building, seven instructors think there are some deficiencies about in-service training, six instructors think the program is inadequate at some points, five instructors think time allowed for the program is not enough, four instructors think having beginner learners is a problem, three instructors think the objectives are not clear, three instructors think they, three instructors think there are some problems for different types of students (voluntary or obligatory) and two instructors think motivation level is low.

Meltem argued that the deepest deficiency was caused the fact that the instructors did not receive aimed at them and that Testing Office, the Measurement and Evaluation unit in the Program should consist of experts. She said "*I think the instructors teaching in the Preparatory Program should receive in-service training, I mean about methods and how to teach a subject. Each instructor is following a different way but all students are assessed in the same way, which can create different outcomes and scores for students. I strongly believe that especially measurement-and-evaluation unit should consist of people who received training about this particular field. Take me for example; honestly I don't believe that I can prove literally efficient without proper training. I mean my present knowledge level about testing is not adequate so as to be able to analyze a question item. The same is true foe those people in audio-visual and printed material. Training to be provided by field experts can be really beneficial for especially people working in these units of the English Preparatory Program.*" (st. 3298-3311)

Instructors' Answers to the Question "What Do You Suggest to Improve the English Preparatory Program?"

As the seventh question in the semi-structured interviews, the instructors were asked the question "What do you suggest to improve the English Preparatory Program?" The instructors' answers to this question and the frequency distributions are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Distribution of the Instructors' Answers to the question "What do you suggest to improve the English Preparatory Program?"

Instructors' Answers to the question "What do you suggest to improve the English Preparatory Program?"	f
a. There should be more emphasis on in-service training	15
b. We should make use of program development experts	6
c. The objectives should be determined clearly	4
d. We should shift to level system	3
e. There should be classes for beginner learners	2
f. We should do research on language teaching and prepare presentations about them	2
g. Use of the Internet in teaching-learning process should be increased	2
h. There should a native speaker of English among instructors	2
i. Studies of Needs Analysis should be conducted	2
Total of Opinions	38

Table 11 reveals that 15 instructors think there should be more emphasis on in-service training, six instructors think they should make use of program development experts, four instructors think the objectives should be determined clearly, three instructors think they should shift to level system, two instructors think there should be classes for beginner learners, two instructors think we should do research on language teaching and prepare presentations about them, two instructors think use of the Internet in teaching-learning process should be increased, two instructors think there should a native speaker of English among instructors and again two instructors think studies of needs analysis should be conducted.

Muharrem suggested that the number teaching personnel should be increased and experts should be called in for in-service training. He said "*We are all 27 people here and, as far as I can see, each instructor is doing their best in a hectic prep syllabus. This busy atmosphere and courses do not allow one to improve himself or herself professionally; I mean both trying to catch up with a heavy workload and trying to improve oneself at the same time is extremely difficult. Maybe, if there were five more instructors in the program, things would be much easier. Improvement of the program depends heavily on instructors' own professional improvement and this depends on in-service training like other universities do. For example, each month we can assign one of our colleagues to do some research on certain topics and they can make presentations about these topics or perhaps we can set up a new office for this task. Some other universities have units called Professional Development Office. They provide their instructors with continued training and certificates. All in all, in my opinion in-service training is a pre-requirement. Also, we can use experts called teacher trainers, for example about how make word derivation process more*

effective. However, I believe assigning some of our colleagues to do research into the points we regard inadequate would be a better idea. Then these people could make presentations about these topics. If, for example, we think that video sessions are not interesting enough for students, these people can investigate the problem and come up with some interesting video activities. Eventually, everybody receives in-service training, which actually matters." (st. 3553-3571)

Sevda suggested that in-service training could also be performed as school-based in-service training. She said "*In-service training is a must. It may be carried out like this: teachers could form groups and discuss about professional issues, let's say once a week. What I understand when we say 'in-service training' is that someone else monitors your lesson.*" (st. 833-835)

Nilgün emphasized the role of the administration in professional development and the importance of keeping up with the latest trends in language teaching. She said "*We are already trying hard to do our best. We check here and there and try to follow others' activities. However, it is the university administration that should ask us what we are doing here in the first place. I mean they should show interest in us directly. They should ask about what syllabus we are following, what we are doing, what we are teaching, what we have been doing for so many years, what our aim is and so on. Unfortunately, they do not care about us although we need to have a good relationship. There may be in-service training sessions or seminars for professional development but the key point here is voluntary participation. I mean people should take part in these activities willingly. The Internet may be quite useful to increase our knowledge about professional issues. We can learn about other countries' experiences – Japan's for example – and use them for our benefit because sometimes there are absolutely identical cases. On the other hand, teachers*

cannot always find time for these things because we have a heavy workload and syllabus in the English Preparatory Program, so they may not want to spend their limited time on these things. However, I think summer holidays may be a good time for these activities. By the way, I'm not sure if this is the right place to talk about this but I think it may be a good idea to announce that there is 15-days' holiday before, for example, a 15 days' seminar. What I mean is that having such a holiday would increase people's motivation. There should always be a balance tasks and rewards and it is the administration that should take responsibility for such an arrangement." (st. 1196-1217)

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This part of the study includes the results gained through the analysis of the data collected by means of data collection tools.

RESULTS

Results Concerning Instructors' Opinions about the Importance of Language Skills

• Among the instructors involved in the study, 77,7% of the instructors find listening skill "very important"; 81,4% of the instructors find speaking skill "very important"; 88,8% of the instructors regard reading as "a very important" skill and 59,2% of the instructors think that writing is "a very important skill".

Results Concerning Instructors' General Opinions about the English Preparatory Program

• The instructors think that the program is successful, it tries to provide students with all the language skills and it tries to offer the best level of general English in a busy program.

Results Concerning Instructors' Opinions about the Aims of the English Preparatory Program

• The instructors state that the aims of the program are to improve the four core language skills, to provide knowledge of Basic English, to have students achieve a level they can follow faculty courses in English and to have students achieve a level they can do researches in English.

Results Concerning Instructors' Opinions about the Content Aspect of the English Preparatory Program

• Among the instructors' positive opinions about the content are that the content meets students' needs, that the content is effective in realizing the aims, that the content meets faculties' needs and that the content is suitable for providing the knowledge of Basic English.
• Among the instructors' negative opinions about the content are that the content is inefficient for students; it should cover technical English as well, that the content does not meet the needs efficiently and that the content is incapable of meeting faculties' needs.

Results Concerning Instructors' Opinions about the Learning-Teaching Process of the English Preparatory Program

• As positive feedback, the instructors state that the methods, strategies, techniques, equipment and environment employed in the English Preparatory Program are suitable for realizing the objectives and the use of audio-visual materials are appropriate.
• However, the instructors also think that the environment is not suitable for realizing the objectives and it affects students in a negative way.

Results Concerning Instructors' Opinions about the Assessment Aspect of the English Preparatory Program

• The instructors state that the assessment types are suitable for realizing the objectives, the content and exams are consistent with each other, the quizzes prepare students for the midterms and the exams are helpful in monitoring student improvement

Results Concerning Instructors' Opinions about the Deficiencies of the English Preparatory Program

• The instructors think that there are physical deficiencies caused by the prep-school building and some deficiencies about in-service training and that the insufficient time allowed for the program, having different types of students (voluntary or obligatory) and low-level of student motivation

Results Concerning Instructors' Opinions about Their Suggestions to Improve the English Preparatory Program

• The instructors state that for the improvement of the program, there should be more emphasis on in-service training, they should make use of program development experts, the objectives should be determined clearly, there should be classes for beginner learners and the program should be designed based upon needs analysis studies.

DISCUSSION

Aimed at investigating the effectiveness of the English Preparatory Program based on instructors' opinions, this study revealed that the instructors were content with the program in general and they thought there were not many problems in terms of the objectives, the content and learning-teaching process and the evaluation process. On the other hand, the study also pointed out that the objectives needed to be revised based on needs analysis and the program should be redesigned based upon these objectives. The study also found out that the physical conditions of the prep school were not satisfactory, students needed motivation, field-specific technical English should be covered so that faculty needs could be met appropriately, the objectives needed revising and clarifying and in-service training programs, particularly school-based ones, were required for professional development.

The most significant ones among these findings were that the instructors thought the English Preparatory Program was inadequate in terms of technical/professional English, that the objectives needed to be determined again and that the program needed to make use of field experts and in-service training practices.

This finding of the research matches up with Kınsız's (2005) study emphasizing that "foreign language education should be interdisciplinary, participatory and innovative," arguing that "the need of professions for foreign language knowledge should be met" and therefore highlighting the importance of professional English. This finding is also in parallel to Kocaman's (1983) study stating that a new foreign language learning situation for specific purposes emerged and this situation is better defined and suitable for use in addition to general objectives in foreign language teaching; it is called professional English or English for specific purposes or foreign language, there are and should be courses related to technical terms, usages and field knowledge. Also, the finding of this study that the program should certainly include Technical English supports Mirici and Saka's (2004) emphasis that students of engineering faculties in particular have to learn English

for both general and specific purposes in order to keep up with the latest technological and scientific developments and Technical English is a requisite.

It is essential that the objectives in a language education program be determined in a way that ensures an individual's personal, social and professional competency. Also, how these aims are determined should let a person develop himself or herself in both social and professional domains and other aspects of the program should be established on this base (Smith, 2005). In addition to the instructors' opinion that the objectives meet the needs, their suggestion that these objectives should be revised and rearranged is in parallel with Smith's study (2005).

The instructors' opinion that they need in-service training is supported by Arıkan's (2004) study suggesting that instructors of English participate in activities held by various institutions to develop themselves and they are actually enthusiastic about that. The findings in this study derived from the opinions of instructors are consistent with the suggestion that there should be in-service training sessions so that teachers develop their communicative skills and motivate students (Deniz, Avşaroğlu and Fidan, 2006).

SUGGESTIONS

• The program objectives should be revised and defined clearly.
• The program should cover technical/professional English so that it could be more productive and efficient.
• There should be in-service training activities through which instructors could develop themselves.
• Program development experts' suggestions should be sought in developing the program.

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