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## **EVALUATION OF THE ENGLISH PREPARATORY CURRICULUM AT ESKISEHIR OSMANGAZI UNIVERSITY (ESOGU) BASED ON THE VIEWS OF THE STUDENTS**

### **Abstract:**

The English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University in Turkey has been developed by views of administrators and coordinators. The views of the instructors have also been considered during the curriculum development process. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University based on the views of students attending the program. For this purpose, the views of 35 students attending the program were taken with a survey designed by the researchers. The data were obtained at the end of the 2013 - 2014 spring term. The qualitative data obtained was analyzed through content analysis. The findings of the study revealed that students' perception on the curriculum is positive to large extent. On the other hand, students suggested revision in the aims of the curriculum, adding some listening courses, variety in activities, extra-graded assignments. They also suggested less grammar focused, more speaking and vocabulary focused activities. In terms of the assessment procedure, they suggested that the quizzes should be announced in advance. The study also revealed that they felt themselves as high school students in the department due to the physical environment and friendly atmosphere created by the instructors.

### **Keywords:**

Language curriculum, curriculum development, preparatory program

**JEL Classification:** I20, I21, I23

## Introduction

The English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University in Turkey has been designed and implemented by the Preparatory Education Unit of the Department of Foreign Languages. It has mainly been developed by the views of the administrators and coordinators of the unit. During the curriculum development process, the views of instructors have also been taken into consideration by the unit. On the other hand, the views of the students which take part in the curriculum are also of importance. Thus the purpose of study is to evaluate the English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University based on the views of students attending the program.

Within this purpose, the research questions of the study are below:

1. What are the views of students on the aims of English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University?
2. What are the views of students on the content of English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University?
3. What are the views of students on the learning – teaching processes of English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University?
4. What are the views of students on the assessment procedures of English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University?
5. What are the metaphoric perceptions of students about the English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University ?

## Method

The study was designed as a qualitative study based on the views of students in the English preparatory program. The instructors were asked for selecting one student to participate in the study and express opinions about the curriculum. Each instructor was requested to make their selection according to the criteria of having critical thinking skills, being reflective and self-expressive. Thus, the instructors identified the participant students. One student from 35 classes participated in the study and shared their views on the English language curriculum.

The views on curriculum were taken through an open ended survey. The survey was developed by three researchers collectively. It was revised and edited several times by the researchers. Finally, it was checked by the co-head of foreign language department. The developing process was finalized following his suggestions.

The data was collected during the last three weeks of the term and all the participants expressed their opinions via the survey. After the data collection, content analysis was done for each part of the survey, frequencies for each view were calculated and themes were reached. The analysis process was conducted by the first researcher.

Subsequently, the analysis was shared with the other researchers. Some views were re-coded and analysis was reviewed.

## Findings

The findings obtained from the study are stated below for each research question:

### 1. *What are the views of students on the aims of English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University?*

Most of the students perceived the aims of the curriculum as developing basic language skills which they will use in their departments. Some students also expressed the view that the curriculum prepares them for academic life in that it includes some issues related to English for academic purposes. There are also some views that the curriculum has a complementary function. They stated that the language curriculum looked like a continuing part of their high school curriculum.

Participant students were also asked for their suggestions for the aims of the curriculum. The suggestions by the students include mainly focusing on developing speaking and writing skills. In addition some students emphasized focusing on academic English, raising intercultural awareness and reading English books.

The findings related to students' views on the effectiveness of the curriculum in terms of the aims revealed that 13 of the students evaluated the curriculum ineffective. In contrast, 7 of them stated that it was effective. In addition 7 students stated that the effectiveness of the curriculum mostly depended upon the students.

### 2. *What are the views of students on the content of English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University?*

The views of the learners on the content of the curriculum were also focused on in the study and they were asked for their opinions about the coursebooks, additional grammar packs, worksheets, video materials and writing packs.

Most students described the coursebooks as interesting, authentic, culture-focused, entertaining and sufficient in a positive way. They also stated the features such as useful, effective, informative and comprehensive in vocabulary. On the other hand nearly half of the students stated negative views such as insufficient in grammar and vocabulary issues, expensive, boring and inappropriate.

On the effectiveness of the grammar packs, most of the students stated positive views. They considered these packs as providing opportunity for practice, supportive, complementary and effective. On the other hand some of the students described them as including lack of practice activities, favouring rote learning and including erroneous parts.

One aspect of the content that was examined was the worksheets used during the period. Although 14 students expressed their effectiveness, 15 students stated their ineffectiveness and suggest that they should be increased in number.

Video materials were considered as effective, entertaining and informative by 18 students. On the other hand some students perceived that they are insufficient, not interesting. The problem of crowded classes and technological problems were also among the negative views by the students.

Another content of the curriculum that was evaluated was the writing packs. Most of the students perceived them as sufficient, informative, effective and efficient. However, some students stated negative views such as lack of samples, short period allotted to them, variety and being boring.

The general suggestions by some students were increasing the number of materials, adding novel and article studies, discrete listening hours, test-driven studies and extra-graded assignments.

### *3. What are the views of students on the learning – teaching processes of English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University?*

The views of the students on the learning – teaching process revealed that they perceived the process as positive in general. Most of them stated that they were satisfied with the techniques used, the schedule, writing classes, computer-assisted course and video classes. The study also revealed that they are happy with the compulsory attendance to lessons. Nevertheless, they suggested more speaking focused activities such as poems, plays, games, more interesting activities, less grammar focused and more vocabulary focused activities.

### *4. What are the views of students on the assessment procedures of English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University?*

The students were also asked for evaluating the assessment procedures within the scope of the study. With regard to mid-term exams, they stated that they were sufficient, effective, supportive and successful procedures. Some students, however, stated that they are too comprehensive and suggested that they should be designed as multiple choice tests.

They perceived the quizzes as supportive, triggering, and useful before the midterm exams and well designed. They suggested that the quiz dates should be announced in advance and detailed feedback should be given afterwards.

On the speaking exams, most of the students stated negative views and suggested increasing their numbers and decreasing their duration. Some of them stated positive views as their being sufficient and supportive.

In general, students suggested the increase in the rate of speaking exams, being fair in classroom performance grades, announcing the quiz dates and decreasing the rates of final exam.

*5. What are the metaphoric perceptions of students about the English language preparatory curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University?*

The learners were also asked for defining the curriculum through metaphor at the end of the survey. They were requested to complete two utterances “*Curriculum in our department is like ..... in that .....*” and “*Being a student in this department is like ..... in that .....*”. 13 students perceived the department as “*a high school*”. The reason for this perception was due to the physical environment, the attitudes and behaviours of the instructors and the administrative procedures. Some students also used the metaphor of “*house*” due to the friendly atmosphere created by the instructors.

10 students also used the metaphor “*a high school student*” to define being a student in the department. The reasons for that were the friendly atmosphere, physical environment, regular practice and exams.

## **Conclusion**

In general the evaluation of the English language curriculum at Eskisehir Osmangazi University Foreign Languages Department based on the participant students revealed that they perceived the curriculum as effective and they were satisfied with the curriculum. On the other hand, the study also revealed that the aims of the curriculum should be revised. In terms of the content of the curriculum, some listening courses can be added into the curriculum and materials may be varied such as adding novel and article analysis, extra-graded assignments. For the learning – teaching process, the views of the learners showed that most students were satisfied with the techniques that the instructors used and the schedule; however, they suggested using more speaking and vocabulary focused, and less grammar focused activities. In terms of the assessment procedures, they were satisfied with the procedures in general. On the other hand, they suggested announcement of the quizzes in advance, increasing the rate of speaking skill in evaluation and being fair in classroom performance grades. Finally, most students perceived the curriculum and the department as a high school and felt themselves high school students.