

From Their Point of View: A Content Analysis on Language Needs of Professionals

Dr. İlknur Kazaz

School of Foreign Languages, Karadeniz Technical University, Turkey

ilknurkazaz@ktu.edu.tr

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Abstract – For the students in Turkey, not just getting into university is sufficient. They have to prove another competence as well, id est language ability. Are preparatory schools, instructors, administrators, namely all stakeholders successful in teaching English and preparing the prospective i.e., doctors, engineers, teachers for being accurate users of English, global citizens, admirable and respected professionals? In order to shed light into this problem, the current study aimed at interrogating graduates and academicians regarding the qualifications of a preparatory program. Hereby, the study has a qualitative research design, Universe is all preparatory program graduates, Sample is Karadeniz Technical University School of Foreign Languages graduate students. Focus group interviews have been made with Medicine students who have graduated from the Preparatory School and their instructors working as doctors at Faculty of Medicine. The qualitative data coming out of the interviews have been analyzed with content analysis. Content analysis is a research method used for the subjective interpretation of the data by identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In order to receive clear answers from the interviews, they were made in Turkish, Translation and Back translation method was employed in the aftermath. Not to violate validity and reliability common codes/total codes x 100 was used for the coding. The results suggest that, the preparatory program fails to improve listening and speaking skills on behalf of students, which led to failure in making in-service oral presentations throughout their career or hesitations to speak when they travel abroad for professional purposes

Keywords – Foreign Language Education, Tertiary Level Education, Qualitative Research, Content Analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

For the students in Turkey, not just getting into university is sufficient. They have to prove another competence as well, id est language ability. Every year when university students complete their registration processes they come face to face with another issue. For the departments in which 30% or 100% of the branch courses are taught in English, such as Engineering, Medicine, International Relations, History, Literature etc., students have to take Tertiary level English education before they start taking courses in their own majors. Provided that these students can submit a document of 60 points passing grade from

Language Proficiency Tests such as YDS, TOEFL, they are exempted from Preparatory School. Unless they submit this document, they are obliged to take the English proficiency exam implemented at the beginning of each academic year. The students who cannot get a passing grade are this time obliged to complete a modular system language program offered by the School of Foreign Languages. The modular system has 4 levels A1-A2-B1-B2 successively. The levels are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). When students can exit all 4 levels successfully, they can graduate from the program. Every level has its own particular requirements. Therefore, students exert great efforts to be able to start the education in their own departments, graduate from it without delay and begin their professional careers. For one year long, they take tertiary level English education and hope to be fluent speakers of English. But is this scenario valid? Are preparatory schools, instructors, administrators, namely all stakeholders successful in teaching English and preparing the prospective i.e., doctors, engineers, teachers for being accurate users of English, global citizens, admirable and respected professionals? In order to shed light into this problem, the current study aimed at interrogating graduates and the academicians regarding the qualifications of a preparatory program.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study has a qualitative research design (Creswell, 2009). The universe of the study is all preparatory program graduates, the sample is Karadeniz Technical University School of Foreign Languages graduate students. Focus group interviews have been made with Medicine students who have graduated from the Preparatory School and their instructors working as doctors at Faculty of Medicine. The qualitative data coming out of the interviews have been analyzed with content analysis. Content analysis is a research method used for the subjective interpretation of the data by identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). In order to receive full answers from the interviews, they were made in Turkish, Translation and Back translation method was employed in the aftermath. In order not to violate validity and reliability common codes/ total codes x 100 formula was used for the coding.

A. Participants

As part of an Accreditation process, the state university conducted a needs analysis with 464 participants in total. There were 306 students studying in the English preparatory program, 38 instructors, 96 graduate students who completed the program and now were studying in their departments and 24 faculty members teaching the English-medium content area courses.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Participants

	Preparatory Program Students	Graduate Students in Departments	Instructors	Faculty Members
Participants	306	96	38	24

All participants were administered a questionnaire initially. In the second phase, out of these participants 18 Preparatory program students, 24 Graduate Students, 6 Instructors and 6 Faculty members were interviewed. The current study analyses the interview with Faculty of Medicine participants with content analysis via coding.

III. RESULTS

The participants answered the questionnaire items in terms of four basic skills; speaking skills, listening skills, reading skills and writing skills successively. Owing to the fact that accreditation related information should be kept confidential, the results given to the questionnaires and their frequency analysis of the answers given in 3-point Likert scale format cannot be revealed. The interview questions are as follows:

Table 2. Questionnaire Items

	Questionnaire
Speaking Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introducing yourself and others2. Explaining likes and dislikes with reasons3. Conversing in English (small talk and chat with people)4. Asking for clarification and follow-up5. Asking questions to the instructor in class and having the instructors answer them6. Stating whether you agree or disagree with an idea with reasons7. Participating in class discussions and defending an idea.8. Summarizing or reporting information verbally (summarizing or reporting information)9. Making short academic presentations (presentations)10. Speaking English on the phone or in applications that allow verbal communication (WhatsApp, Skype, Facetime, etc.)
Listening Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Understanding the important points of the lecture2. Understanding the key words, main idea and details in the listening parts of the materials covered in the course.3. Listening to the lecture and create a summary4. Understanding everyday conversations5. Understanding academic conversations
Reading skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Getting an idea of the text in general by taking a quick look at it (skimming)2. Reading a text and reaching certain information sought (scanning)3. Understanding instructions given in exams or assignments4. Guessing the meaning of unknown words without using a dictionary (guessing the meaning from the context)5. Getting the main idea from the reading passage6. Distinguishing whether the reading passage reflects the author's individual views or scientific facts7. Reading and understanding abbreviated university-level academic materials8. Being able to recognize the purpose of the reading passage (cause/effect, compare/contrast, critical)9. Summarizing the reading passage
Writing Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Answering open-ended questions in exams2. Writing letters in English (official letter, business letter, etc.)3. Writing a CV in English4. Writing emails in English5. Filling out forms in English (application form, survey, etc.)6. Writing a well-developed academic paragraph (writing a paragraph)7. Writing short academic papers with a thesis statement and supporting paragraphs8. Writing different types of essays (cause/effect, compare/contrast, critical) (writing essays)9. Writing summaries10. Expressing the information in written sources in your own words (paraphrasing)11. Using various grammatical structures correctly12. Writing a report of the data collected for assignments (e.g. writing a report of an experiment or observation carried out in the laboratory)

B. Data Analysis

3 Themes and 9 codes emerged out of the coding of the data.

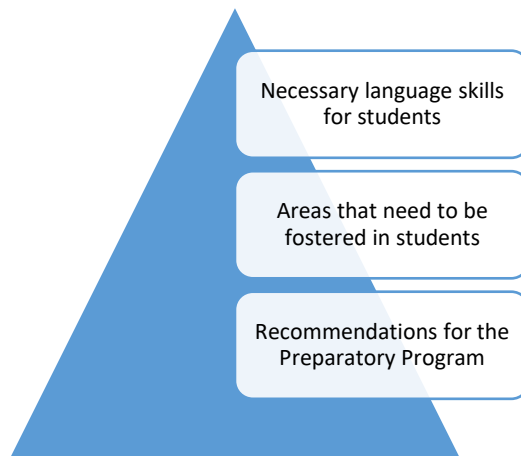


Fig. 1. Themes emerged as a result of the content analysis

Table 2. Codes emerged as a result of the content analysis

Theme	Code	Participant
Necessary Language Skills for students	Listening	A1,A2,L1
	Speaking	A1,A2,L1
	Writing	L1
Areas that need to be fostered for students	Academic terms	A1,A2
	Pronunciation	L1
	Making presentation	A1,L1
Recommendations for the Preparatory Program	Native speakers	A2
	Communicative Practice	A1,A2,L1
	Written Practice	L1

When participant answers were analyzed, some common codes were realized.

[SPEAKING]I think we have a lot of shortcomings in terms of speaking - A1

First of all, vocabulary and grammar are good, but listening and speaking are bad - A2

More English writing and speaking skills practices can be added to the preparatory program – L1

[ACCURACY & PRESENTATION] I think we are quite lacking in terms of sentence formation

...but I would like to make presentations in English in any meeting - A1

Therefore, most of them add those distorted sentence structures to their presentations in that way- L1

IV. CONCLUSION

The results suggest that, the preparatory program fails to improve listening and speaking skills on behalf of students, which led to failure in making in-service oral presentations throughout their career or hesitations to speak when they travel abroad for professional purposes. Individual factors such as identity, lack of self-confidence, introversion, perfectionism, being innately anxious and sentimental can make a barrier for learning (Oxford, 1999).

This finding is in line with Krashen's (1986) affective filter hypothesis. The affective filter hypothesis explains that language cannot be learned if the language learner is blocking the learning process some way or another. The learner might seem mentally prepared to learn, however the higher the filter, the more likely language learning is impeded. Since they feel speaking anxiety, it would have been better to have practices with native speakers more. This findings contradicts to the studies in which the presence of native speakers provoked the fear of negative evaluation among language learners (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; Conway, 2007; Doyman & Yumru, 2020, Yilmaz & De Jong, 2024)

The students would also appreciate if they were taught academic terms more. From lecturers point of view, the students have difficulty in reading and understanding scientific articles. They tend to use Google translate a lot. Students have accuracy problems, because their sentence structures are distorted and fragmented. They misspell many words and have pronunciation problems. Students with English preparatory education can master at Medical Literature better. So, if writing and speaking skills are taught and focused more, students will be successful in their departments compared to the ones with no preparatory program education.

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The author confirms that scientific and ethical rules are followed in this article.

APPENDIX

FACULTY OF MEDICINE ASSISTANT FOCUS-GROUP INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Researcher: Let's start then. First of all, thank you for participation↑.

Assistant 1: Thank you.

Researcher: During the accreditation process, interview sessions with some of our professors and er (0.3) assistants are required. It is related to the program in preparation. I will ask five questions about this. Let's start with our first question, if you like↑. Which English language skill or skills do you need most in your academic studies?

Assistant 1: In terms of English language skills↑

Researcher: Yes:=

Assistant 2: So, we don't have such grammatical things in the academy. Vocabulary I think↑. Medical vocabulary. More

Researcher: Can we call it term?

Assistant 2: Yep yep(.)

Researcher: You need more knowledge of medical correspondences. Is there anything in your department, sir [mutual look]?

Assistant 1: So in addition to this er. Of course, we don't make many presentations, but I would like to make presentations in English in any meeting. That's why :=

Researcher: huh huh(.)

Assistant 1: I think we have a lot of shortcomings in terms of speaking.

Researcher: Hmm(.)

Assistant 1: I think we are quite lacking in terms of sentence formation.

Researcher: Maybe for the development of this↓?

Assistant 1: Of course.

Researcher: Moving on to our second question. What are the most common problems you encounter in terms of English language skills in your academic studies? Actually, you said but.

Assistant 1: Sometimes we try things, for example, YouTube, as an example, There are injection videos or, in other cases, MRI videos. For example, because our vocabulary is not very good, and because the listening part is not very good, so do we, er : : (0.4) I have problems with them too. I Don't understand the words, even if I know them, sometimes I can't understand them. Pronunciation [+overlap]

Researcher: Their pronunciation may be a little unclear. you say

Assistant 2: This seems like listening and speaking are a little weak in preparation school.

Assistant 1: Yes:=

Assistant 2: Also in preparatory training. For example, in our time, the word business was going well.

Researcher: Uh-huh (.)

Assistant 2: At the end, we could understand what we read in terms of grammatical words, but speaking and listening were a little weak, for example, we felt that way at the end of the preparation program.

Researcher: You felt this. Well (0.2) So, what are the strengths of the English preparatory program in terms of teaching the language skills required for your academic studies?

Assistant 2: What can I say↓ [thinking]

First of all, vocabulary and grammar are good, but listening and speaking are bad.

Researcher: Uh-huh(.) It is strong in words and grammar. Our fourth question, we actually answered the weaknesses. We can move on to five.

Researcher: What changes would you recommend regarding the provision of language skills required in your academic studies?

Assistant 2: For example, when we, we, I was in prep class. I started from Beginner. Well, a native speaker↑ came to us in the second term.

Researcher: Uh-huh (.)

Assistant 2: So, maybe it would be more beneficial to have more environments where we can speak English directly to foreigners. Direct:=

Researcher: huh (.)

Assistant 2: In terms of English, the courses started to be taught in English, for example, not in the first preparation period, but in the second semester, but even there, the English lessons are taught in Turkish, for example.

Researcher: Yes. So you want it to be with a native instructor. Do you have any, sir?

Assistant 1: To me. Our prep class was a bit like this. It was like fusion. Like that. You don't have that mindset anyway. I didn't think I should learn English, but I passed the exam. University Entrance exam.

Researcher: huh (.)

Assistant 1: Just to relax. We had a training to relax for a year long.

Researcher: Hm:: (0.2) So, were you left relaxed? [Smile]

Assistant 1: We were left relaxed [Laughter], but even if we had a hard time there, would it have helped us much? Would it be of much use↑ to us if we did not use it anywhere↓ and had no use for it in daily life? I don't guess. This is not something that will happen later anyway, because we have a lack of education since childhood. We studied English every year but never learned it. This is not something that can be fixed later. I think it's difficult unless you go abroad↑ or use it in daily life.

Researcher: You mean, we think this is a bit difficult in preparation. To have English developed. We need to be a little more involved (0.3).

Assistant 1: It is necessary to get along and adapt to that mentality a little. You know, I will learn English here. As a student who enters the preparation program like that. Maybe that's how teachers enter, though.

Researcher: Yes, yes:=

Assistant 1: Not many people go into preparation like that as a student. Frankly, that awareness does not exist.

Researcher: Also, due to your department, you leave the university exam very tired:=

Assistant 1: And we will start a very intense tempo.

Researcher: That's right, yes. And you say that that break is seen as a rest.

Assistant 1: From my perspective.

Assistant 2: Well, things are very different, for example. The success of a first-year medical student studying English preparatory school versus the success of a non-preparatory student[↑]. Because we are resting a little in preparation. He becomes more successful. Yes. Those without preparation education fail more.

Researcher: Because they are very tired.

Assistant 2: Yes:=

Researcher: For example, is preparatory training necessary for medical school? Or how can it be fixed? We need to work on them[↓].

Assistant 2: For example, not in dentistry. There is no in pharmacy[↓] either.

Assistant 1: So, if there is medical education in English[↑], of course, but for a person who will receive normal medical education, I do not think that the preparation contributes much.

Assistant 2: Me too. It may be optional.

Assistant 1: It's not much different from the English you learned in high school.

Researcher: Well, thank you for your sincere answers. I wish you ease.

FACULTY OF MEDICINE LECTURER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Researcher: Dear Academician, first of all, welcome. (0.3) Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: Hello! Thank you. [↑]

Researcher: Hmm (.) As the School of Foreign Languages, we have an accreditation process. We are meeting with our professors in certain relevant departments. I will ask you a few questions on behalf of the medical school, madam. ↑

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: Of course. [+approving look]

Researcher: Now ↑ let's start with our first question. : : (0.4)
What English language skill(s) do your students most frequently need to follow departmental courses conducted in English↓?

Faculty of Medicine Faculty Member: First of all, ↑ it is very important for us to have a general command of English for both medical education and our entire professional life after graduation. Because we scan and read the vast majority of medical resources, publications and disease guides in English. However↓, when we look at the 6-year course curriculum of our medical school, I see that the department courses are not taught in English. All lessons are in Turkish. Only after graduation, assistant physicians read articles and meta-analyses and prepare them as presentations for us. At this stage, the language skills they need most often are reading and reading comprehension.

Researcher: Thank you ↑ for your answer. : : (0.2) Moving on to our second question.

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: [+waiting for the question]

Researcher: What are the most common difficulties your students encounter in terms of English language skills while following departmental courses conducted in English?

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: [thinking] As I said, there are no departmental courses conducted in English in our faculty of medicine. However, after graduation, our assistant physicians may have problems understanding and translating English articles. Their vocabulary may also be insufficient. These are the most common problems.

Researcher: Okay. And our third last question. : : (0.2)

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: [+waiting for the question]

Researcher: Considering the English language skills your students need to follow department courses conducted in English, what changes would you like to make in the English preparatory program?

Faculty of Medicine Faculty Member: For these suggestions; when I think like this : : (0.3) [thinks]

First of all, most of our assistants use Google translate when preparing article presentations. ↓

Therefore, most of them add those distorted sentence structures to their presentations in that way. Again, there may be some deficiencies in

pronunciation that I encounter. For example, a physician (muscle) who tried to read the original title of the article a few months ago pronounced it as [mʌskəl] instead of [mʌsəl]. ↓ Therefore, we want our students to be better equipped in terms of English. ↑ We are lacking in English in terms of practice↑. [side voice] In our professional life, we have many congresses both at home and abroad. It is very important for us to understand and speak medical science in English, to be able to make a presentation on that subject, and to both understand the questions and answer fluently in the discussion section at the end of the presentation. ↑

When we look at the medical faculties with English medical education, we see that they are a little ahead of the faculties with Turkish medical education. [side voice]

And these physicians can have a better command of English medical literature after graduation. When I think about it, : : (0.2) [thinks] More English writing and speaking skills practices can be added to the preparatory program, which may be useful. In fact, the main problem here is the medical education phase after the preparatory education.

Researcher: Hmm (.)

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: It would be very good to include English in the medical education program in this period. They have problems both reading and presenting literature. I think that a student who has studied and studied English for six years will be much more successful in terms of language when he graduates.

Researcher: So, in general, your suggestions are as follows. ↑ You think your students have problems translating er: : (0.2) [thinks]. You think they have problems presenting. Therefore, you recommend improving writing skills and speaking skills ↑ by the preparation program.

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: Yes, yes. [+approving look]

Researcher: But more importantly, you stated this. : : (0.3) Students in medical faculties in English can master English a little better because they receive medical education continuously for six years.

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: Yes. ↑ They are much more advantageous. [overlap]

Researcher: They can be much more advantageous. So, perhaps you would suggest that English be added more to your medical school curriculum, at least as a departmental course.

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: Yes:=

Researcher: Well, thank you very much for your answers.

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: Thank you. [mutual glance]

Researcher: It was very useful↑. Hopefully, we will take the necessary precautions and make corrections.

Faculty of Medicine Lecturer: Thank you. Enjoy your work.

Researcher: Thank you, you, too.

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