



EVALUATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE IN A TURKISH UNIVERSITY: THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

English language education has been an essential constituent of Turkish educational system since the worldwide popularization of English as a foreign language particularly after the second half of 20th century. After the seventy-year period witnessing constant changes in course hours, materials and methods, etc., studies indicate that problems related to language education in Turkey still remain unresolved.

In this study, it is aimed to investigate higher education-level English language course in a provincial state university from the students' perspective. The study intends to simultaneously find out the students' opinions about English language and learning it, their evaluations of the course in question, and finally the problems leading to unsuccessful language learning experiences.

The study was conducted in a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, where a Likert-type questionnaire was administered at three faculties and two vocational schools of Iğdır University in 2010-2011. The data were analyzed via SPSS 17.0 and percentages, mean and standard deviation values were determined through descriptive statistics while Chi-square and G statistics were used as inferential statistics to test the association between participant responses and independent variables of age, gender and school type.

The results have shown that the students find English course of medium difficulty and they are motivated to learn English and they find the language necessary for both professional and social motives. The students demand more communicative activities promoting practical language use during the classes and more objective tests (true – false, matching or completing) in the assessment and evaluation processes. The majority of participating students believe that finishing high school with insufficient language education is the main reason for failure or inefficient learning in the course. The results have also indicated that students' age and gender do not significantly affect their viewpoints while their being whether a faculty or a vocational school student has a significant association with their responses to many items.

The study indicates that university students believe that all parties have responsibilities that should be actualized for better and more effective language education at universities in Turkey: the instructors should experiment with more contemporary methods and techniques while teaching, the students should have more a sophisticated approach towards language learning than only focusing on passing, and the system should accomplish a continuity in language education between primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Keywords: English language course, student viewpoints, English language education in Turkey.



INTRODUCTION

English language education has been an essential constituent of Turkish educational system since the worldwide popularization of English as a foreign language particularly after the Second World War in the second half of 20th century. Alongside many political reasons that would be irrelevant to argue within the scope of this study, the prevalence of English in science, technology, international relations and in many other social, cultural and economical aspects of modern and intellectual life resulted in the inclusion of English language courses into the curricula in all levels of education in Turkey.

Turkish higher education institutions follow differing regulations in their foreign language teaching policies. Oğuz, Oktay and Ayhan (2010) classify Turkish universities in three groups in terms of their foreign language education policies: first group involves the majority of Turkish universities, where courses are taught completely in Turkish and there is a limited amount of compulsory foreign language education (for the time being at least two hours a week for minimum two semesters). In the second group universities, instruction is in Turkish in general, but some certain courses or programs are entirely taught in a foreign language (such as Marmara University and Istanbul Technical University). Finally, the third group includes universities where the medium of instruction is English or another foreign language, such as Boğaziçi University or Bilkent University. This study focuses on the compulsory English language courses taught at the universities in the first group in this classification.

Literature Review

It is unfortunate that after the seventy-year period witnessing constant changes in course hours, materials and methods, etc., studies indicate that problems related to language education in Turkey still remain unresolved (Çelebi, 2006; Güler, 2005; Işık, 2008; Karahan, 2007). Işık (2008) identifies two primary issues accounting for the problems in Turkish foreign language education as the methodological mistakes resulting from foreign language teacher training system, and deficiencies in language planning. Teachers show a tendency and insistence on following traditional teaching methods, such as grammar-translation or audio-lingual methods, however, current trends in language teaching methodology promote rich, frequent and comprehensible input and more communicative tasks during language courses (Kraschen, as cited in Işık, 2008; Ellis, as cited in Işık, 2008).

Another major reason for the inefficacy of language education in the country is the lack of continuity between the levels of the educational system. Çetintaş (2010) asserts that language education starting at primary school do not proceed with the principle of continuity at secondary school, where courses restart from the beginner level, and argues that this discontinuity between successive levels of education impairs the reforms such as starting language education at early ages. This discontinuity inevitably influences the students' motivation and willingness for language learning and their attitudes towards the course. The dilemma is more apparent at the tertiary-level education where, after long years of language education in both primary and secondary school, courses are taught at pre-intermediate level at best chance in a majority of Turkish universities.

Purpose of the Study

In this study, it is aimed to investigate higher education-level English language course in a provincial state university from the students' perspective. The study intends to simultaneously find out the students' opinions about English language and learning it, their evaluations of the course in question, and finally the problems leading to unsuccessful language learning experiences.

With the purposes given above, following research questions arise:

- 1) What do the students of Iğdır University think about English language and learning it?
- 2) What is the general approach of the students towards this course?
 - a. Do they attend to courses actively and regularly?

- b. How do they find the course materials and assessment methods?
- 3) What are the student-, instructor- and context-related problems?
- 4) Do the responses differ according to the independent variables of age, gender, and school type (faculty or vocational school)?

METHOD

Research Design

This study is based on a survey design focusing on students' viewpoints of compulsory English language course at a provincial Turkish university. The reason for preferring a survey design is to generalize the results obtained from a sample to a population and to benefit from economical advantage and the rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell, 2014). The survey was cross-sectional and administered personally by the researcher.

Population and Sample

The survey was administered at Iğdır University located at Iğdır province of Turkey, and the subjects were three hundred twenty-seven students from all active faculties (Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Theology) and vocational schools (Vocational School of Iğdır and Vocational School of Medical Services) of Iğdır University in 2010-2011 academic year. The participants were all first and second year students taking English language course at that time, excluding those absent on the day the survey was administered. Table 1 provides information regarding the demographic features of the participants. The university was founded in 2008, only two years before the study; therefore the number of students is low for some departments (see Table 1). English language is taught at elementary level for two or three hours (three hours in the faculty of agriculture, and two hours in the others) for two to four semesters (four semesters in the faculty of Theology and two semesters in the others) at the university.

Table 1: Percentages and Frequencies of the Demographic Features of Participating Students

Variable		Percentage	Frequency
Gender	Male	46,8	153
	Female	53,2	174
Age range	17-20	55,7	182
	21-24	40,1	131
	25 and over	4,3	14
Vocational School	Vocational school of Iğdır	37,9	124
	Vocational school of Medical Services	5,5	18
Faculty	Fac. of Engineering	4,3	14
	Fac. of Theology	44,0	144
	Fac. of Agriculture	8,3	27
Total			327

Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

Along with the demographic information part (asking about participants' gender, age and faculty/vocational school), the fifty-three-item-questionnaire was basically in three parts: the first part eliciting the opinions and attitudes of university students towards English language and English language learning (ten items); the second part inquiring about students' attendance to and opinions about English course and the teaching and evaluating processes (sixteen items); and the third part asking about the problems related with students, teaching staff and the context (sixteen items). The questionnaire was in Turkish language and it ended with an open-ended question which asked the students to add further comments if any.

The itemization was determined by the authors as a result of primary literature review (Gardner & Smythe, 1981; Gullu, 2007; Horwitz, 1988; Pekguc, 2008) and field experience. The pilot study was conducted with thirty students and after the necessary changes the final draft was handed out and collected from the participants individually by the researcher at the end of the fall semester in 2010-2011 academic year. Reliability coefficient

of the questionnaire was found to be .819 according to Cronbach's Alpha, which means that the study was 82% reliable.

Analysis of Data

Data analysis was conducted in two steps where first, descriptive statistics were used in order to obtain participant responses in frequencies, percentages and mean and standard deviation values; and second, Chi-Square and G statistics that test the significance of association between participants' responses and independent variables of gender, age, and school type. All statistical analyses were performed via SPSS 17.0.

RESULTS

The study results are presented in two main parts. In the first part, the percentages of participant responses to items in the three sub-sections of the questionnaire are presented. The second part includes findings related to the relationship between responses and independent variables.

Students' Opinions about English Language and Learning It

As Table 2 depicts, almost half of the students find English language course at medium difficulty, and as for the difficulty of language skills, students hardly make a distinction between the difficulty of receptive (reading and writing) and productive language skills (speaking and listening).

The results regarding the rest of the items (3-10) in this section reveal that İğdır University students have a positive attitude towards English and they are motivated to learning it. Item number eight, "English language is crucial for an academic career" has the highest mean value in this section (m= 4,24), and the item 9, "English language will help me find a better job" and item 5 "With the help of English language, I can communicate with more people" have second and third highest mean values (m=4,23 and m=4,22, respectively).

Table 2: Percentages and Mean and Standard Deviation Values of the First Section Items

Items	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	M*	SD*
	%	%	%	%	%		
1. English language course is	12,2	17,1	42,2	20,8	7,6	2,9	1,08
2. Reading and writing in English are easier than speaking and understanding this language.	14,1	30,6	12,5	28,1	14,7	2,9	1,31
3. I think English language will make me a more knowledgeable person.	4,6	7,3	9,2	45,3	33,6	3,9	1,06
4. With the help of English, I can take part in cultural activities arranged by European Union.	4,6	13,1	18,3	36,4	27,5	3,6	1,14
5. With the help of English, I can communicate with more people.	2,8	5,5	6,1	37,9	47,7	4,2	,97
6. With the help of English, people will respect me more.	14,1	22,9	15,9	33,0	14,1	3,1	1,29
7. English language will help me understand other cultures.	2,8	5,8	7,3	47,7	36,4	4,0	,95
8. English language is crucial for an academic career.	5,2	4,9	3,4	33,6	52,9	4,2	1,08
9. English language will help me find a better job.	3,4	6,4	3,7	36,1	50,5	4,2	1,02
10. It is not important to learn English language.	54,7	35,2	4,9	2,4	2,8	1,6	,89

*For the first item 1=very difficult, 2 =difficult, 3= medium difficult, 4=easy, 5=very easy; for other items 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, 5= strongly agree; M=Mean, SD=standard deviation

Students' Evaluation of English Language Course

As shown in Table 3, the items with the highest mean values in this part were item 18 (M= 4,07), item 17 (M=3,90), item 11 (M= 3,77) and item 12 (M= 3,51), respectively. These results display that the majority of the students are of the opinion that practical language use in the lessons and objective testing in the assessment and evaluation are essential. Three- fourth of the participants attend English courses regularly, almost 60 % actively participate into the lessons and find course subjects interesting. For the item number 20, the students were asked to rate on the five reasons (20a, 20b, 20c, 20d, and 20e) for not attending the classes, however the majority disagreed on all options provided and very few of them wrote other reasons when asked in the last item (20f) to indicate if any. Those who answered to this item commonly stated they felt shy and diffident, and worse ridiculous to speak in front of others, for some, because of pronunciation-spelling differences in English.

Table 3: Percentages and Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Second Section Items

Items	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	M*	SD*
	%	%	%	%	%		
11. I attend the English courses regularly.	3,1	12,2	10,7	52,3	21,7	3,7	1,02
12. The topics in the English courses draw my interest.	7,3	14,4	16,2	43,4	18,7	3,5	1,16
13. Course materials help us learn English.	15,6	22,6	18,7	33,6	9,5	2,9	1,25
14. I find it difficult to understand the course book and related handouts.	13,8	30,6	15,0	28,7	11,9	2,9	1,27
15. I find the course book and related handouts easy/below my level.	20,2	46,8	16,5	12,8	3,7	2,3	1,05
16. Oral exams should take place in the assessment and evaluation process.	22,9	17,4	15,3	30,3	14,1	2,9	1,40
17. Objective tests (true-false, matching, completing, etc.) should take place in the assessment and evaluation process.	4,0	7,3	11,9	47,7	29,1	3,9	1,02
18. There should be more practical language use during the classes.	4,0	6,4	8,3	41,0	40,4	4,0	1,04
19. I actively attend to English classes.	6,1	24,2	10,4	42,5	16,8	3,3	1,19
20. I do not actively attend to English classes because							
20a. I am not interested in English	39,1	35,5	10,4	9,5	5,5	2,06	1,17
20b. the classes are usually teacher-centered and one-sided	31,8	37,3	6,7	18,0	6,1	2,29	1,25
20c. I cannot catch up with the lessons	28,7	36,1	10,4	17,1	7,6	2,38	1,27
20d. I find the instructor insufficient in the field	52,0	30,0	7,0	4,6	6,4	1,83	1,15
20e. I am shy about speaking English/I feel shy in front of my friends.	37,0	31,5	10,1	13,1	8,3	2,24	1,29
20f. Please indicate other reasons if any							

*1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree, M=Mean, SD=standard deviation

Student-, Instructor, and Context-related Problems

For the first ten items in the second section, participants were provided with ten student-related problems that might negatively affect their learning. As seen in Table 4, highest mean values belonged to item 24 (M= 3,74), item 30 (M=3,36) and item 25 (M=3,26), respectively. Finishing high school with insufficient foreign language knowledge, not studying regularly, and focusing on only passing the exams are considered to be learner-related problems leading to failure in this course by the majority of students.

Table 4: Percentages and Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Third Section Items (Problems Related to the Learners)

Items	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	M*	SD*
	%	%	%	%	%		
21. Lack of tendency to foreign language learning	22,3	31,8	11,9	23,2	10,7	2,68	1,33
22. Dislike for foreign language	30,6	36,7	9,2	16,2	7,3	2,33	1,26
23. Being prejudiced against foreign language	27,5	36,1	11,0	16,8	8,6	2,42	1,28
24. Finishing high school with insufficient foreign language knowledge	13,5	11,3	3,1	31,5	40,7	3,74	1,42
25. Focusing on only passing the exams.	15,6	19,3	8,9	35,2	21,1	3,26	1,39
26. Having insufficient mother tongue knowledge	21,7	27,8	13,8	22,3	14,4	2,79	1,38
27. Reluctance	20,8	31,2	11,9	25,1	11,0	2,74	1,33
28. Leisureliness after the university entrance exam	26,6	29,7	9,8	24,8	9,2	2,60	1,35
29. Economic, familial and personal reasons	41,3	35,5	5,8	11,0	6,4	2,05	1,22
30. Not studying regularly	14,1	18,0	7,6	38,2	22,0	3,36	1,37

*1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree, M=Mean, SD=standard deviation

Following seven items, as given in Table 5, pointed to instructor-related problems that may influence the efficacy of the course. Student responses for all items in this section are observed to be cumulated between “strongly disagree” and “disagree”, which means that the students do not consider any in-class behavior of their teachers relevant to unsuccessful language learning experiences. At this point, it should be explained that the survey was administered anonymously; therefore, the probability that the students might have some personal expectations (receiving better grades or more attention, etc.) from the instructors seems irrelevant. Still, the item with the highest mean value is “being confined to course book” (m=2,62).

Table 5: Percentages and Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Third Section Items (Problems Related to Course Instructor)

Items	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	M*	SD*
	%	%	%	%	%		
31. Coming to class half-heartedly	60,2	24,8	6,1	4,0	4,9	1,68	1,08
32. Lack of communication	42,5	24,5	7,0	17,7	8,3	2,24	1,37
33. Lecturing in a teacher-centered and boring way	48,3	26,0	7,0	11,6	7,0	2,03	1,28
34. Being too disciplined	41,3	30,3	9,2	11,3	8,0	2,14	1,28
35. Being unable to discipline and control the class	52,0	32,4	4,6	6,4	4,6	1,79	1,08
36. Being confined to course book	30,3	26,0	8,9	20,5	14,4	2,62	1,45
37. Promoting memorization	43,1	30,0	8,3	11,0	7,6	2,10	1,27

*1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree, M=Mean, SD=standard deviation

With the last ten items in the third section of the study, it was aimed to analyze contextual problems related to curriculum, physical conditions, and educational system. As illustrated in table 6, the items with the highest mean values are item 41 (M=3,52) and item 40 (M=3,18), which state “unavailability of practical language use” and “absence of diverse activities during the classes”, respectively.

Table 6: Percentages and Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Third Section Items (Problems Related to Context)

Items	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	M*	SD*
	%	%	%	%	%		
38. Having an intensive program in a short period of time	23,5	30,0	9,2	20,8	16,5	2,76	1,43
39. The irrelevance between the course and the department	31,8	40,1	7,3	11,9	8,9	2,25	1,26
40. Absence of diverse activities during the classes	18,0	17,1	11,6	34,3	19,0	3,18	1,40
41. Unavailability of practical language use	11,9	15,9	8,0	36,1	28,1	3,52	1,36
42. Over-crowded classrooms	25,4	34,3	10,4	18,0	11,9	2,56	1,35
43. Insufficient course hours	22,0	27,8	8,3	25,1	16,8	2,86	1,43
44. Difficulty of the exams	25,1	31,5	15,3	17,4	10,7	2,57	1,32
45. Inefficacy of the exams in measuring student improvement	22,0	28,4	17,7	15,9	15,9	2,75	1,38
46. Taking the course compulsorily	27,2	26,3	13,1	19,6	13,8	2,66	1,41
47. The fact that educational system is based upon memorization	22,6	24,5	13,1	20,2	19,6	2,89	1,45

*1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree, M=Mean, SD=standard deviation

At the end of the questionnaire, an open-ended question was placed, to ask about further student evaluations. When the student comments in this section were analyzed, it was deduced that most of the responding students wrote statements similar to item contents. Here are some examples of responses written by the participants:

“I really want to learn and speak English but it seems hard as we didn’t get required education beforehand.”

“It is much better to do more practice in English lessons. Course hours are insufficient and we lack basic knowledge of this language, so we fall behind the lessons.”

“I want this course to be based on conversations and dialogues. We do not have basic knowledge so some of us do not like this course, but I like and want to learn this language.”

Responses and Independent Variables

Statistically significant relationship was found between age and student responses for only the items of 1, 35 and 41 ($p < .05$), indicating that younger students find the course easier and the instructor more disciplined, and older students demand more practical language use in the classes. As for the association between responses and gender, results did not refer any significant association, excluding the items number 1, 2, 9, 14, 20B and 21 ($p < .01$). According to participant responses to item 1 and 2, the course in general and productive skills in particular are easier for male students and the causal connection between learning English and having a better job is also more acknowledged by male students than females. On the other hand, females agreed in higher percentages on the items 14, 20B and 21 than males (for items, see table 3 and 4).

The results have also revealed that school type (faculty / vocational school) influences the participants’ viewpoints about English language and English language course. A high correlation was observed between school type and responses to more than half (28 out of 52) of the items (see Table 7). From the contents of these items (see items in table 2, 3, 4,5,and 6), following conclusions can be inferred: the course is more difficult for vocational school students, and stronger convictions related to the difficulty of speaking and listening comprehension skills are observed for this group. Faculty students find course topics and materials more interesting (in item 12), beneficial (in item 13) and easier (in item 14) than vocational school students (see Table 7).

Table 7: Percentages of Participant Responses According to Faculty/Vocational School

Items	Faculty Students					Vocational School Students					Significance	
	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	Chi	G
i1	7,6	13,5	38,9	28,1	28,1	18,3	21,8	46,5	11,3	2,1	**	**
i2	7,6	35,1	14,1	27,0	16,2	22,5	24,6	10,6	29,6	12,7	**	**
i3	2,2	5,4%	13,0	44,9	34,6	7,7	9,9	4,2	45,8	32,4	**	**
i4	2,2	10,8	20,0	38,4	28,6	7,7	16,2	16,2	33,8	26,1	ns	ns
i5	2,2	4,3	5,4	37,3	50,8	3,5	7,0	7,0	38,7	43,7	ns	ns
i6	8,1	22,7	18,4	36,8	14,1	21,8	23,2	12,7	28,2	14,1	**	**
i7	1,6	3,8	7,6	43,2	43,8	4,2	8,5	7,0	53,5	26,8	**	**
i8	5,4	2,7	2,7	28,1	61,1	4,9	7,7	4,2	40,8	42,3	**	**
i9	3,8	7,0	1,6	29,7	57,8	2,8	5,6	6,3	44,4	40,8	**	**
i10	60,0	33,0	2,7	1,1	3,2	47,9	38,0	7,7	4,2	2,1	*	*
i11	1,6	12,4	8,1	54,1	23,8	4,9	12,0	14,1	50,0	19,0	ns	ns
i12	4,3	8,1	15,7	49,2	22,7	11,3	22,5	16,9	35,9	13,4	**	**
i13	12,2	19,1	20,4	37,0	11,3	23,7	30,9	14,4	25,8	5,2	**	**
i14	15,7	35,1	15,7	23,8	9,7	11,3	24,6	14,1	35,2	14,8	*	*
i15	17,8	48,6	16,8	14,1	2,7	23,2	44,4	16,2	11,3	4,9	ns	ns
i16	18,9	15,7	15,7	34,1	15,7	28,2	19,7	14,8	25,4	12,0	ns	ns
i17	3,8	5,9	12,4	49,2	28,6	4,2	9,2	11,3	45,8	29,6	ns	ns
i18	4,9	6,5	9,2	37,8	41,6	2,8	6,3	7,0	45,1	38,7	ns	ns
i19	5,4	24,3	8,6	45,4	16,2	7,0	23,9	12,7	38,7	17,6	ns	ns
i20a	42,7	36,2	9,2	7,6	4,3	34,5	34,5	12,0	12,0	7,0	ns	ns
i20b	37,8	41,1	4,3	13,0	3,8	23,9	32,4	9,9	24,6	9,2	**	**
i20c	34,1	38,4	9,7	12,4	5,4	21,8	33,1	11,3	23,2	10,6	**	**
i20d	63,2	28,1	2,7	2,7	3,2	37,3	32,4	12,7	7,0	10,6	**	**
i20e	36,8	30,3	10,8	14,6	7,6	37,3	33,1	9,2	11,3	9,2	ns	ns
i21	25,4	29,7	14,6	22,2	8,1	18,3	34,5	8,5	24,6	14,1	ns	ns
i22	34,1	35,1	9,7	14,6	6,5	26,1	38,7	8,5	18,3	8,5	ns	ns
i23	29,7	33,5	10,3	17,8	8,6	24,6	39,4	12,0	15,5	8,5	ns	ns
i24	16,8	13,5	2,7	28,1	38,9	9,2	8,5	3,5	35,9	43,0	ns	ns
i25	17,8	17,3	8,6	37,8	18,4	12,7	21,8	9,2	31,7	24,6	ns	ns
i26	20,5	28,6	13,0	23,2	14,6	23,2	26,8	14,8	21,1	14,1	ns	ns
i27	22,2	33,0	11,4	24,3	9,2	19,0	28,9	12,7	26,1	13,4	ns	ns
i28	27,0	32,4	9,2	21,6	9,7	26,1	26,1	10,6	28,9	8,5	ns	ns
i29	39,5	37,8	7,0	10,8	4,9	43,7	32,4	4,2	11,3	8,5	ns	ns
i30	13,0	16,2	7,0	40,0	23,8	15,5	20,4	8,5	35,9	19,7	ns	ns
i31	68,6	23,2	2,7	1,6	3,8	49,3	26,8	10,6	7,0	6,3	**	**
i32	53,0	25,9	4,9	11,4	4,9	28,9	22,5	9,9	26,1	12,7	**	**
i33	60,0	24,3	5,4	6,5	3,8	33,1	28,2	9,2	18,3	11,3	**	**
i34	50,8	36,2	4,9	3,8	4,3	28,9	22,5	14,8	21,1	12,7	**	**
i35	58,4	30,8	3,2	5,9	1,6	43,7	34,5	6,3	7,0	8,5	**	**
i36	40,0	29,7	8,6	13,0	8,6	17,6	21,1	9,2	30,3	21,8	**	**
i37	53,0	30,3	8,1	3,8	4,9	30,3	29,6	8,5	20,4	11,3	**	**
i38	27,0	36,2	9,7	15,7	11,4	19,0	21,8	8,5	27,5	23,2	**	**
i39	33,0	40,5	7,6	10,8	8,1	30,3	39,4	7,0	13,4	9,9	ns	ns
i40	19,5	21,6	14,1	30,3	14,6	16,2	11,3	8,5	39,4	24,6	**	**
i41	14,1	15,7	9,7	33,5	27,0	9,2	16,2	5,6	39,4	29,6	ns	ns
i42	33,5	40,0	10,3	10,8	5,4	14,8	26,8	10,6	27,5	20,4	**	**
i43	18,4	23,8	7,6	29,7	20,5	26,8	33,1	9,2	19,0	12,0	*	*
i44	33,0	37,3	14,6	10,3	4,9	14,8	23,9	16,2	26,8	18,3	**	**
i45	27,6	30,8	15,1	14,1	12,4	14,8	25,4	21,1	18,3	20,4	*	*
i46	32,4	30,3	11,4	13,5	12,4	20,4	21,1	15,5	27,5	15,5	**	**
i47	27,0	25,4	12,4	17,8	17,3	16,9	23,2	14,1	23,2	22,5	ns	ns

1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree, Chi=Chi-square statistics, G=G statistics; *= $p < 0,05$; **= $p < 0,01$; ns=not significant ($p > 0,05$)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study have shown that students share the conviction that English language is crucial for social, cultural, economic and academic aspects in their lives and that they have positive attitudes and high motivation towards English language and learning it. Formerly conducted studies in Turkish contexts had similar results regarding the positive attitudes and high motivation of Turkish students towards English language (Bektaş-Çetinkaya and Oruç, 2010; Gullu, 2007; Uzum, 2007).

With respect to the activities and teaching methods, the students think that more communicative and practice-based activities would be more beneficial than teacher-centered and course-book-based activities. Similarly, in the study by Güllü (2007), the participating students believed that the lessons should be more student-centered. In addition, on the evaluation procedures the students demand more objective tests, consisting of exercises such as true-false, completing or matching. Another challenge that is required to be eliminated for effective language learning at university is the lack of a sufficient English language input at primary and secondary education. The results derived from students' responses have shown that there is a high demand for more practice-based exercises in foreign language courses. Gökdemir (2003) also indicated that higher emphasis on theoretical information rather than practical language use is a problem to be solved with this respect.

As regards to the relations of responses with the variables (gender, age and faculty/vocational school), it was concluded that the variables of gender and age group did not have a significant effect on students' responses, while the faculty/vocational high school studied made significant differences in participant reflections. Similar results can be found when related literature is reviewed. Üstünel and Samur (2010) found that gender and department are not always a determining factor in students' beliefs about language learning. Hussein, Demirok and Uzunboylu (2009) also studied university students' attitudes towards English language and they came up with the results that students' attitudes were not affected by the variables of gender and department, which partly contradicted with our study when the variable of department is taken into consideration. Al Rifai (2010) also stated that there was no significant difference in students' beliefs about English language course with respect to their age.

The study suggests that English language teaching and learning at university level is not at a satisfactory level for the students even though the necessity of English language knowledge is acknowledged by the majority. Students demand more communicative tasks during classes while they prefer more objective assessment criteria such as true-false, matching or sentence completing. On the other hand, the students recognize the fact that they do not study regularly and passing the exams is their primary purpose in the course. Another reason that the students attribute inefficacy in this course is insufficient language input in their educational background. Therefore, it is necessary to examine and reform preceding levels of educational system if future amendments to be done in English language education at universities. Seemingly, all parties have some responsibilities that should be actualized for better and more effective language education at universities in Turkey: the instructors should experiment with more contemporary methods and techniques while teaching, the students should have more a sophisticated approach towards language learning than only focusing on passing, and the system should accomplish a continuity in language education between primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Acknowledgement: We would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ecevit Eydurhan, who helped us with the statistical analyses of the study, and Prof. Dr. Mehmet Takkaç for their support and contribution.

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