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## Problems and Solutions concerning English Language Preparatory Curriculum at Higher Education in View of ELT Instructors

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### Abstract

This study aims to explore the problems and the solutions concerning the English language preparatory curricula implemented at Eskişehir Osmangazi University, School of Foreign Languages according to ELT instructors. Participants of the study are 50 ELT instructors teaching English language in three different proficiency levels (A1, A2, B1). Case study, a qualitative research method, was adopted in the study and self-report method (written reports) was used to gather the data. Deductive, or top-down approach, was used to analyze the qualitative data. The results of the study reveal that the problems and the solutions as to the curriculum are analyzed under four themes that are objectives, teaching materials, assessment and evaluation and general structure. Concerning the objectives, lack of clarity and control of the objectives are among the problems. The problems as to course book, additional materials and writing pack are analyzed under the second category that is teaching materials while the problems regarding midterms, quizzes, project works, writing portfolios, and class performance grade are analyzed under the third category that is assessment and evaluation. Last, three sub-categories as to general structure are as follows: physical problems, problems as to number and level of students in the classrooms and administrative problems. Solutions to the problems are suggested.

**Key words:** EFL, Preparatory curriculum, Higher education, Problems and solutions, ELT instructors

### Introduction

The English language is increasingly significant as a means of communication and interaction among different cultures. English language is spoken by 400 million people all around the world and it is the language most widely used as a lingua franca language of communication among non-native speakers (Aydın & Zengin, 2008; Gömleksiz & Özkaya, 2012). As the main language of communication in the world, using English could have positive effects at an individual level (Demirel, 1993). In particular, people have a desire to learn English language due to such reasons as keeping up with technological developments, having a better career, recognizing different cultures, and developing a different perspective (Akpur, 2017).

Although English language has a vital status as lingua franca all over the world, it has been observed that Turkish learners cannot master English language (Sarıçoban & Öz, 2012; Suna & Durmuşçelebi, 2013). According to the report titled “Turkey National Needs Assessment of State School English Language Teaching”, despite having received an estimated 1000+ hours of classroom instruction, Turkish students fail to learn English before the end of high school. As a result, the students’ language performance in higher education impacts negatively upon the learning quality in the higher education institutions where the medium of instruction is English (TEPAV, 2015). Besides, according to results of English proficiency index, Turkey ranks very low among the first hundred countries included into the index (EPI, 2019).

The increasing importance of learning a foreign language has been reflected in Turkey’s educational policies since the Tanzimat period and teaching English as a foreign language has been continuing since the reform era in Turkey (Haznedar, 2010; Suna & Durmuşçelebi, 2013). Similarly, it is obvious that individuals or students spend a great time and effort from primary school to the senior year of high school in order to learn English as a foreign language. However, it seems English language cannot be mastered despite the effort spent at both political and individual levels (Bağçeci, 2004; Mehdiyev et al., 2016; Suna & Durmuşçelebi, 2013).

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These problems prove that there is a need for studies exploring the factors yielding to the failure in learning English language. In particular, preparatory schools offer intense language instruction to the students to study an English-medium department at universities. Knowledge of foreign languages gains importance especially at higher education level in terms of pursuing academic studies and having a successful professional life (Şen Ersoy & Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu, 2015). For this reason, most students who could not have an effective foreign language education until the university need to gain foreign language skills within an academic year after they start university (Akpur, 2017; Erdem, 2018).

However, both instructors and students encounter various problems that negatively affect language learning quality in the preparatory schools. English lessons have been carried out at all grades and levels beginning from the second grade primary school since the academic year 2013-2014 (Küçüktepe, Küçüktepe & Baykin, 2014). However, the abolition of the compulsory preparatory classes at pre-university education levels and the failure to assess the foreign language knowledge and skills of the students in the university entrance exam lead to inefficient courses at pre-university education levels –i.e. primary, secondary, and high school. (Akpur, 2017; TEPAV, 2015). Thus, it is necessary to reveal the problems and propose solutions in order to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the preparatory schools.

Universities in Turkey have been offering foreign language education including at least one academic year. Foreign language education is carried out within preparatory schools or foreign languages departments of universities. The main purpose of the education offered in preparatory program is “to teach the student the basic rules of the foreign language, to improve the vocabulary knowledge of foreign language, to understand what he reads and hears in the foreign language, to enable him to express himself orally and in writing” according to the relevant regulation of the Higher Education Institutions (YÖK, 2016). Depending on the purpose, specified in the regulation, students are expected to acquire four basic skills of language as well as improve their grammar and vocabulary knowledge of a foreign language in the preparatory classes of higher education institutions.

In these programs, the expected level of language at the end of one academic year is B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. At the end of the language proficiency exam held at the beginning of each academic year, between 5% and 10% of the students can start undergraduate programs without taking the preparatory education. (TEPAV, 2015). Students who fail the exam enroll at the preparatory program and they can pass it if they succeed in the foreign language proficiency exam held at the end of the first or second academic year. However, students who fail two consecutive years in prep-class lose their right to study in an English-medium department and are forced to change their university or department (YÖK, 2016).

In order to achieve the aim of the education given in preparatory classes at higher education level, it is necessary to prepare and implement the curriculum effectively and systematically. For this reason, it is necessary to identify the deficiencies of the curriculum and to propose solutions to improve the curriculum. Studies investigating the effectiveness of the preparatory curriculum at higher education level exist in literature (Akpur, 2017; Balcı, Durak Üğüten & Çolak, 2018; Cloves & Aytunga, 2019; Coştu, 2011; Gökdemir, 2005; Karatas & Fer, 2009; Öztürk, 2017; Scott & Akdemir, 2018; Seven & Sonmez, 2004; Shirtless & Özkaya, 2012; Şen Ersoy & Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu, 2015). The results of these studies show that there are problems in English education offered in preparatory classes at higher education level.

According to the results of the researches, preparatory curriculum is insufficient to meet the expectations of students to develop sufficiently in speaking skills (Akpur, 2017; Durak Üğüten & Çolak, 2018; Karatas & Fer, 2009; Seven & Sonmez, 2004; Scott and Akdemir, 2018; Shirtless & Özkaya, 2012; Şen Ersoy & Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu, 2015). In addition, other problems are as follows: mismatch between the objectives of the preparatory curriculum and student expectations (Karataş & Fer, 2009; Sağlam & Akdemir, 2018; Seven & Sönmez, 2004; Şen Ersoy & Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu, 2015 ), the lack of English for specific purposes in the preparatory curriculum (Durak Üğüten and Çolak, 2018; Karataş & Fer, 2009; Şen Ersoy & Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu, 2015), grammar-focused instruction (Durak Üğüten & Çolak, 2018; Gökdemir, 2005), negative views on the course materials (Fer, 2009; Karanfil & Aytunga, 2018) negative views on the assessment and evaluation processes (Akpur, 2017; Durak Üğüten & Çolak, 2018; Öztürk, 2017; Şen Ersoy & Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu, 2015).

The aim of this case study is to explore the views of ELT instructors working in the English Preparatory Department of School of Foreign Languages at Eskişehir Osmangazi University on objectives, teaching materials, assessment and evaluation and general structure of the preparatory system. Furthermore, the study is significant in terms of its contribution to the solution of similar problems experienced in higher education preparatory programs in Turkey.

## Method

In this section, design of the research, participants and context, and data collection and analysis are explained.

### Design of the research

In the study, case study method, one of the qualitative research designs, was used to identify the problems related to the English Preparatory Curriculum in higher education and to propose solutions to the problems. Case study aims to deeply analyze and interpret a complex phenomenon such as an important problem, event or program. The situation should be limited to a unit such as a group of students, class, school, case or event (Mertens, 2014). In this study, problems as to the English preparatory curriculum were taken as a case and the limited situation was analyzed using the reporting technique (written reports of ELT instructors).

### Participants and context

The study group of the study consisted of 50 ELT instructors who are conducting the curriculum at A1, A2 and B1 proficiency levels of Eskişehir Osmangazi University, Foreign Languages Department in 2018-2019 academic year. Teaching experience of the participants change from 3 to 23 years. At the time of the research, the lessons were carried out by 11 instructors in B1 level, 18 instructors in A2 level and 21 instructors in A1 level. Since the entire research population was included in the study, sampling was not found necessary.

Eskişehir Osmangazi University Department of Foreign Languages (ESOGUFLD) undertakes the duty of conducting English preparatory education for the students of the Faculties of Engineering, Architecture, and Economics and Administrative Sciences who do not have the required English proficiency level. The Curriculum Development Office is responsible for identifying the problematic aspects of the curriculum and conducting necessary arrangements in cooperation with the administration, coordinators and, other offices (assessment and evaluation office).

In ESOGUFLD, English language curriculum was designed by members of curriculum development office in cooperation with the administration in 2016-2017 academic year after an extensive needs analysis. The objectives of the curriculum are in live with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and curriculum development office has been conducting studies to develop the curriculum. The present research reports one of the studies done within the scope of curriculum development studies in ESOGUFLD.

Regarding the content of the curriculum, the selected course book with the approval of all the instructors is followed throughout the academic year. In addition, supplementary packs (writing pack, reading pack, etc.) prepared by the coordinator responsible for each proficiency level are followed in all classes when required. Finally, every week, additional activities prepared by the coordinators are e-mailed to the instructors. Regarding assessment and evaluation, students' progress during an academic year is evaluated as a whole. For this purpose, periodic exams (co-quizzes), free quizzes, midterms, final exam, writing quizzes and project presentations are applied at every level and students are expected to get at least 70 points in order to be successful (ESOGUFLD Foreign Language Instruction and Examination Directive, 2018).

### Data collection

The research was conducted in 2018 and 2019 academic year by using a qualitative data collection technique, self-report technique. In order to conduct the research, firstly, a form was prepared to enable the instructors to report the problems related to the curriculum and suggest solutions to these problems. The form was first prepared in cooperation with two ELT instructors in 2017 and 2018 academic year. The first instructor had a PhD degree in curriculum and the other one in English Language Teaching. The experts were in duty in the curriculum development office with the researcher in 2017 and 2018 academic year. The first draft of the form was used throughout the entire academic year (2017-2018) to get the opinions of instructors about the curriculum. After, at the beginning of the 2018 and 2019 academic year, the form was revised by the researcher in cooperation with the expert on curriculum and instruction and it was used to gather data. The instructors were not asked any questions in the form so as not to guide them and they were expected to express the problems they encountered in a written way under the headings "objectives, teaching materials, assessment and evaluation, and general structure" of the preparatory curriculum. Besides, they were expected to suggest solutions to the problems they expressed in the form. Last, the instructors were not obliged to express problems related to all the categories in the form at the same time. They could choose any categories in the form to report

the problems and suggest solutions. The form was sent to the instructors by e-mail and they replied the e-mail after they filled in the form. The data collection procedure was demonstrated in the Table-1.

Table 1. The schedule of data collection

Fall term	Spring term
<b>22<sup>nd</sup> October</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> February</b>
Instructor-1	Instructor-1
Instructor-2	Instructor-2
Instructor-3	Instructor-3
Instructor-4	Instructor-4
Instructor-5	<b>25<sup>th</sup> February</b>
<b>29<sup>th</sup> October</b>	Instructor-5
Instructor-6	Instructor-6
Instructor-7	Instructor-7
Instructor-8	Instructor-8
Instructor-9	<b>4<sup>th</sup> March</b>
Instructor-10	Instructor-9
<b>5<sup>th</sup> November</b>	Instructor-10
Instructor-11	Instructor-11
Instructor-12	Instructor-12
Instructor-13	<b>11<sup>th</sup> March</b>
Instructor-14	Instructor-13
Instructor-15	Instructor-14
<b>19<sup>th</sup> November</b>	Instructor-15
Instructor-16	Instructor-16
Instructor-17	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March</b>
Instructor-18	Instructor-17
Instructor-19	Instructor-18
Instructor-20	Instructor-19
<b>26<sup>nd</sup> November</b>	Instructor-20
Instructor-21	<b>25<sup>th</sup> March</b>
Instructor-22	Instructor-21
Instructor-23	Instructor-22
Instructor-24	Instructor-23
Instructor-25	Instructor-24
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> December</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> April</b>
Instructor-26	Instructor-25
Instructor-27	Instructor-26
Instructor-28	Instructor-27
Instructor-29	Instructor-28
Instructor-30	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April</b>
<b>10<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Instructor-29
Instructor-31	Instructor-30
Instructor-32	Instructor-31
Instructor-33	Instructor-32
Instructor-34	<b>29<sup>th</sup> April</b>
Instructor-35	Instructor-33
<b>17<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Instructor-34
Instructor-36	Instructor-35
Instructor-37	Instructor-36
Instructor-38	<b>6<sup>th</sup> May</b>
Instructor-39	Instructor-37
Instructor-40	Instructor-38
<b>24<sup>nd</sup> December</b>	Instructor-39
Instructor-41	Instructor-40
Instructor-42	<b>13<sup>th</sup> May</b>
Instructor-43	Instructor-41
Instructor-44	Instructor-42
Instructor-45	Instructor-43
<b>31<sup>st</sup> December</b>	Instructor-44

Instructor-46	Instructor-45
Instructor-47	<b>20<sup>th</sup> May</b>
Instructor-48	Instructor-46
Instructor-49	Instructor-47
Instructor-50	Instructor-48
	Instructor-49
	Instructor-50

As seen in the table, the numbers were used to code the participants. For instance, the first instructor that participated in the study was coded “Instructor-1” and the second one as “Instructor-2” and so on. As seen in the table, the first five instructors were expected to fill in the form on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2018 or the following days of the week and the next five instructors were emailed the form next week (on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2018) to fill it in. After, all the instructors were sent the form in regular turns in fall term, the same procedure was repeated in spring term beginning from the first week. Thus, the data of the research were collected over an academic year.

## Findings

As a result of the analysis, data gathered to investigate the participants’ views on the issues and processes (objectives, teaching materials, assessment and evaluation and general structure) in the preparatory curriculum are presented accordingly. Table-2 shows the problems and suggested solutions related to the objectives of the English preparatory curriculum.

Table 2. Problems and solutions related to the objectives of the English preparatory curriculum

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested solution</b>
Lack of -clear objectives	Determining the objectives of the preparatory curriculum and determining an assessment system for evaluating language use
-focus on the objectives towards language production	Adoption of a production-oriented assessment system
Intense content -leads to lack of evaluation of the objectives achieved - prevents the objectives from achieving	Instead of following books and additional materials, a framed curriculum can be prepared to allow teachers to design their own activities.

As it can be seen in the Table-2, the first of the problems as to the objectives of the curriculum is the lack of clarity. In addition, the lack of focus on the objectives of the curriculum towards language production is the second problem. In order to solve both problems, it is suggested that an evaluation system to assess language use should be adopted.

Instructor-1: *“In fact, everyone is confused about objectives of the curriculum, most of us do not know what a student can do after completing the prep class. Everything we teach must be beneficial for the student in real life, for example, if the student cannot use relative clauses properly in real life, this is not real learning. ... The extent to which the student is able to use what is taught must be tested in the exam, our objectives should be tested in exams”*

In addition, the intense content causes some problems that are concern of not falling behind the syllabus and the lack of evaluation of the students' learning. Intense content especially in A1 level disallows the instructors to give sufficient time to students to digest the newly taught subject. Also, they are unable to check how far the students achieve the objectives. In order to solve these problems, the instructors suggest that a framed curriculum should be followed instead of a book-driven curriculum.

Instructor 15: *“ After the quizzes we call progress test, we don't see which structures have been learnt. Even if we focus on them, the curriculum does not allow to revise the problematic topics. A large percentage of the final exam must be production-oriented ”*

Instructor 9: *“ The aim is to finish the book or to make students communicate in the four basic skills? We should be able to prepare our own material; a material office can be established. We can prepare a framed curriculum and go accordingly.”*

The problems related to the teaching materials of the English preparatory curriculum are examined under the titles of course book, additional materials, and writing pack. Table 3 shows the problems and suggested solutions related to the teaching materials of the curriculum.

Table 3. Problems and solutions related to the teaching materials of the English preparatory curriculum

<b>Course Book</b>	
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Solution</b>
Vocabulary <i>insufficient</i> <i>-vocabularies in number</i> <i>-activity types</i>	
Reading <i>Short reading texts at low levels</i> <i>Insufficient</i> <i>-reading texts in number</i> <i>-question types</i> <i>Question styles incompatible with the ones asked in the exam</i>	Selecting a new course book
Grammar <i>Language structures that are not included in the book although the level is appropriate.</i> <i>Insufficient number of production-oriented activities compared to mechanical activities high in number</i> <i>insufficient number of grammar activities</i>	Supporting the available course book with additional materials.
Repetitive themes and topics	
Repetitive activity types	
High level grammar structures	
Videos that do not catch interest of the students	
Inconsistencies in the answer key	
The i-tool that is not user friendly	
Sudden rise in language level of B1 book	
<b>Additional Materials</b>	
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Solution</b>
Additional materials that do not support / eliminate the deficiencies of the book	Communication-oriented activities as well as mechanical activities are needed Listening activities are needed The materials should include questions similar to the types of questions asked in the exam individual activities in addition to pair / group activities are needed At least one compelling and high level reading text every week Activities compatible with rising level of book B1
Quality problems resulting from the creation of additional materials by a single person	Assignment of additional materials to all ELT instructors. Creating an additional materials pool independent of the book Creating an online platform and sharing materials among the instructors Establishment of material office
Problems as to photocopying the materials	Additional materials can be combined to make a pack so that students can buy it at the beginning of the year.
Low level of materials for B1 level students	
Absence of activity keys	
Loss of clarity when reproduced and projected on the board	

<b>Writing pack</b>	
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Solution</b>
Inconsistency between the example paragraphs in course book and writing pack	Skipping the relevant section in the course book and focusing on the pack only
Example paragraphs incompatible with the ones asked in the exam	
Lack of objectives to improve academic writing skills	additional materials to overcome the deficiencies

As shown in the Table-3, there are problems related to the course book and writing pack, and the additional materials. Initially, the instructors find the course book insufficient particularly in terms of vocabulary, reading and grammar. Apart from this, repetitive topics and activities in the book are among the problems mentioned. Last, other problems are as follows: the students are asked the structures that were not taught before, the videos are not interesting, the i-tool of the book is not user-friendly, and the level of the book suddenly rises when the B1 book is switched. The instructors propose two different solutions to all the problems related to the book: changing the course book and overcoming the problematic aspects of the book with additional materials.

Instructor 17: *“number of readings is insufficient in the book,... Extra reading should spread to the year and I reading extra can be given per week”*

Instructor 43: *“The grammar part of the book is very weak and should be supported with materials. The activities are very mechanical. Therefore, it is good to have communicative additional.”*

Instructor 31: *“Some exercises of the book include structures that are not taught to the students. I'm skipping those parts.”*

Instructor 21: *“Software is not user-friendly. We should change the course book”*

Besides, there are problems with the additional materials prepared by the coordinators and sent to the instructors each week. The most common problems concerning the additional materials are that they don't overcome the deficiencies of the book, that the creation of the materials by a single person (coordinator) reduces their efficiency and quality, and that the additional materials cannot be photocopied and used. Solutions suggested to the first problem are as follows: communication-oriented activities should be sent in addition to mechanical activities, listening activities should be sent, questions similar to the types of questions asked in the exam should be sent, pair/group activities as well individual activities should be sent each week, more challenging and high-level reading passages should be sent, and activities appropriate to the language level of the B1 book should be sent.

Instructor 21: *“Extras include group activities most of the time, individual activities should be sent, as well”*

Instructor 17: *“...Course book is weak in terms of reading. Reading material is better every week, not every two weeks. Some more compelling texts can be given for the reading material.”*

Instructor 25: *“In Int (B1), listening activities' language level suddenly become so high that students don't understand. easy-to-difficult listening activities can be added to additional.”*

Suggested solutions to the problem of the creation of additional materials by a single person (the coordinator) are as follows: Creation of additional materials by all instructors by the distribution of tasks, creation of an additional materials pool independent of the book, creation of an online platform where the instructors can share materials, establishment of material office.

Instructor 32: *“It is not wise for a single coordinator to create extras. A task sharing can be made and editing task can be left to the coordinators.”*

Instructor 42: *“Additional are used to compensate for the deficiencies of the book. A pool can be created for additional. But this task would not be broken down to a few teachers, but it should be a platform where purpose-oriented activities are shared, not book oriented ones. Instead of preparing material from the beginning, we can share materials we find from other sources. The whole school should have access to this resource platform”*

Regarding the photocopy problem in the department, instructors suggested a pack be prepared at the beginning of the semester.

Instructor 48: *“Materials need to be multiplied in photocopy room, we cannot use them this way. A copy of the materials may be left to the room for us.”*

Finally, the low level materials for B1 students, absence of activity keys, loss of clarity when reproduced and reflected on the board due to poor quality of additional materials are the other problems mentioned.

Additionally, there exist some problems with the writing pack. Firstly, the paragraph examples given in the book and the writing pack do not match each other. In order to solve this problem, the instructors suggest that the relevant section of the course book should be skipped and only the writing pack should be used.

Instructor 3: *“Pack was good, but the students did not understand the examples. They were confused by the opinion paragraph style in the book. They had difficulty in understanding the opinion paragraph questions. Opinion paragraph should be done just like in the pack and that section in the book should be skipped”*

Apart from this, lack of aims to develop academic writing skills is another problem encountered. Regarding the problem, the instructors state that students are unable to acquire basic information about consistency, coherence, writing the main idea sentence and to use the conjunctions correctly and appropriately. The proposed solution is to overcome deficiencies with additional materials

Instructor 22: *“It was decided not to achieve the objectives of academic writing, but students are incapable of using even the simplest linking words, organization, coherence, mechanics. They do not consciously use a few transitions and patterns they have learned. Therefore, even if the student is not given a pack, worksheets supporting writing tasks can be prepared and given.”*

Final problem is that that the example paragraphs given in the writing pack do not reflect paragraph characteristics expected in the exam.

Instructor 50: *“The pack given for opinion paragraph is all of our troubled teachings, and in the example paragraphs, there are no features that we will consider later when evaluating.”*

The problems related to the assessment and evaluation processes of the curriculum are examined under the titles of quizzes, midterms, writing exams, project presentations and classroom performance evaluation. The problems and suggested solutions related to the assessment and evaluation processes of the curriculum are shown in Table-4.

Table 4. Problems and solutions related to the assessment and evaluation of the English preparatory curriculum

<b>Quizzes</b>	
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Solution</b>
Incompatibilities between different quizzes, midterms and final exams	All exams should be reviewed by coordinators, and assessment and evaluation office and necessary corrections and arrangements should be made.
Quiz duration that disallows the evaluation of all subjects taught	Quizzes can be divided and conducted once a week instead of once every 2 weeks Quizzes can be divided by taking skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking, grammar and vocabulary) into consideration and 2 skill exams can be conducted (such as vocabulary + reading + listening and writing + grammar + speaking) Different skills can be assessed in different exams without including all skills in each quiz
Inadequate number of quizzes assessing non-book activities	Increasing the number of free quizzes by reducing the number of general quizzes
Questions assessing grammar and vocabulary rather than language use	Increasing the number of questions that assess language use
Question types insufficient in number	

<b>Midterms</b>	
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Solution</b>
Mentally exhausting exams that cover multiple choice, listening and writing in a single session	The writing exam should be conducted as a separate session followed by multiple-choice and listening session and a half-hour break should be given between the two sessions .
Exam's language level below / above students	
Lack of diversity in question styles that are prepared by a single coordinator	A diverse type of questions to be included into the exams
Inadequate number of vocabulary questions	
Inadequate number of questions that assess language use	
Unfair assessment in speaking exams that last too long.	Duration of speaking exams can be shortened by giving a single activity instead of 2 activities.
<b>Writing Portfolio</b>	
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Solution</b>
Lack of real assessment because of the considerable overlap between tasks in the course book and quizzes	Making changes in the tasks before asking them in the exam
Lack of opportunity to give feedback to the writings of the students before the quizzes	Adopting a process-oriented approach instead of product-oriented writing and using different correction techniques (such as codes)
Lack of opportunity to evaluate students' actual performance because of the model paragraph reflected on the board	
Problems related to the rubric used in the evaluation	Recommendations for adding new criteria to the rubric
<b>Project work/presentations</b>	
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Solution</b>
Students' low language level and lack of affective readiness for project presentations in the first weeks	Carrying out the first projects at a later date (for A1 and A2 levels)
Excess number of project presentations in a semester	Making an additional quiz instead of the first semester project presentation and project presentations that start in the second semester
Poor performance of students	
Inefficiency of project presentations in view of students	Monitoring the progress of students' performance throughout the year by identifying a single format instead of project assignments in different formats
Students unwilling to do project assignments that require video footage	
Lack of student interest in project topics	
Decrease in the number of students presenting project in the second semester	Getting ideas from students for different projects
Students that are in different classes and present the same presentation	Presenting options to students instead of forcing them to do projects in a single format
The compelling tasks that do not support the learning English	Projects that students will both have fun and be exposed to English
<b>Class Performance Evaluation</b>	
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Solution</b>
Inability to evaluate students' participation in class	Determination of an assessment and evaluation system for evaluating students' classroom performance

The first problem with quizzes is the mismatch between different quizzes, midterms and final exams. It is stated that in order to solve this problem all exams should be reviewed by coordinators and assessment and evaluation office and corrections and arrangements should be made when necessary. The second problem is the subjects that cannot be included in the exam due to the short duration of the second term quizzes (45 min). Suggested solutions to this problem are as follows: Quizzes can be divided and conducted once a week instead of once every 2 weeks, or quizzes can be divided according to skills and different skills can be assessed in different exams. Third problem with quizzes is the inadequate number of quizzes that assess non-book activities, and as a solution, it is proposed to increase the number of free quizzes by reducing the number of general quizzes. Last, questions that assess grammar and vocabulary rather than use of language in the quizzes and the lack of diversity in question types asked in the quizzes are among the problems mentioned.

Instructor 18: *“Quizzes and midterm are sometimes not parallel. Because different instructors prepare them. Coordinators need to be able to provide feedback to the quiz and make corrections”*

Instructor 25: *“We don't have to ask reading and listening questions in every quiz. Or reading and listening can be given as a separate quiz. Grammar and vocab separately.”*

Instructor 2: *“We don't have a chance to evaluate non-book activities. More free quiz, less general quiz is better”*

Instructor 8: *“Fitting quizzes into 2 pages and 45 minutes restricts us. Students study only in quiz week. Quizzes can be done every week.”*

Instructor 7: *“They are too much mechanics and recognition oriented. We should prepare more production-oriented quizzes. Less quizzes that assess communication skills and that are short should be prepared.”*

The most frequently highlighted problem about midterm exams is that multiple-choice midterm exams, listening and writing exams conducted in a single session is exhausting for students. For this reason, it is suggested that the writing exam be held as a separate session after the multiple choice plus listening session and a half-hour break between the two sessions should be given. The second problem is that the preparation of the midterm exams by a single coordinator prevents the diversity of question styles so it is necessary to include different types of questions in the exam. The third problem related to the midterm exams is that the instructors are mentally tired and the assessment is not fair in the later part of the speaking exam as it takes too long. The solution suggested is to shorten the duration of the exam by giving students a single activity instead of 2 activities in speaking exams. Apart from these, the level of exams below / above the students, insufficient number of vocabulary questions and insufficient number of questions that assess the use of language are among the problems concerning the midterm exams.

Instructor 38: *“There should be a short break for writing sections in midterms. It is very exhausting for students to answer all questions that assess all skills in a single session”*

Instructor 40: *“There was not enough number of productive sections in the midterms. In addition to writing a dialogue question, word formation, sentence completion, re-write, open-ended question types can be added to the midterms”*

Instructor 47: *“The mid-term exam evaluation takes a long time. It prevents fair assessment. Speaking takes too long and it is unnecessary. If the number of tasks is reduced to 1, we can also save time. It's not exhausting, as well”*

Instructor 43: *“Language usage in midterms is easier compared to students' level.”*

Instructor 1: *“In our midterm, the vocabulary section was insufficient. There should be more vocab questions. vocabularies should also be asked as single items.”*

Concerning the writing exams (writing portfolio), it is frequently stated that the students could enter the exam by memorizing the text they are going to write and; therefore, a real assessment and evaluation could not be made because the same task in the book is asked in the exams. In order to solve this problem, it is suggested that the activity in the book be changed and asked in the exam. Secondly, the lack of opportunity to give feedback to the example paragraphs of the students is another problem concerning the writing exams. As a solution, it is suggested to adopt a process-oriented approach instead of product-oriented writing and to use different correction techniques (such as codes) while giving feedback to the students. Apart from the two problems, some suggestions are made for the problems related to the criteria of the rubric used for grading the writing exams. Final problem expressed is that actual performance of the students during the writing exam cannot be evaluated because of the model paragraph reflected on the board.

Instructor 14: *“The biggest problem for the writing portfolio is that the student memorizes the writing tasks in the book and writes it in the quiz. We can't control it and we have to give them a high score because they write without error. The task given in the book should be changed a bit and given that way.”*

Instructor 4: *"It is not fair to give exam to the students immediately after teaching the subject. First, we should teach and then make students write the first draft in class and give feedback. Let's do the exam a week later according to the feedback given in the class. We can allow students to write the second draft in the exam and evaluate it. Teachers should use the correction code in these drafts and students should search and find."*

Instructor 6: *"When the model paragraph is turned on, they just completely copy it. What they learned???, we cannot understand ..."*

Instructor 23: *"The use of simple and complex sentences should be added to the writing criteria "*

Instructor 41: *" rubrics should be reviewed. Even the student who makes it very bad gets at least 70. This tolerance is too high for the pre level. rubrics should be more distinctive"*

Related to project presentations, problems as to the timing of project presentations are expressed. According to the instructors, especially A1 students are not prepared for the project presentations in the first weeks. For this reason, it is proposed that the first projects be carried out at a later date. The second problem is the high number of project presentations made in a single term. For these problems, it is suggested to make an additional quiz instead of the first term project presentation and to start project presentations in second term. In addition, the instructors state problems arising from the students. These problems are as follows: students not performing the projects properly (low performance of students), students not finding the project presentations effective in terms of learning English, students unwilling to do the project assignments that require video shooting, the lack of interest in the project subjects, the decrease in the number of students preparing presentations in the second term, and students taking the projects from each other and presenting them in the classroom. Suggested solutions for these problems are as follows: identifying a single format instead of project assignments in different formats, monitoring the progress of students' performance throughout the year, getting ideas from students for different projects and presenting options to students instead of forcing them to prepare projects in a single format.

Instructor 1: *"The first project date is very early in beginner and elem levels. It can be done a little later. Their language level is insufficient."*

Instructor 19: *"the project topics are generally not of interest to the students. Literature review and citation can be given to students as project work.. The students may be offered options or decide on the project subject"*

Instructor 20: *"Something is not fully understood, I do not know whether this is due to students, but student performance is very poor. Just one project each term is okay, and two projects each semester do not contribute much to students' learning. Beginner level students may also not do project work in the first term. For example, not all students want to shoot video. Participation is dropping thoroughly in the second term. Students take projects from each other"*

Instructor 12: *"Students should make just one project in a term and plan the project step by step with the teacher. Drafting and making presentations once doesn't do much for them"*

Instructor 31: *"Projects should focus on the fun part of English. Students don't have to always make serious presentations. They say I won't get the points. There should be projects that students will have fun and be exposed to English"*

Instructor 42: *" Our second term project was confusing and challenging. The goal was not to learn English, but to force the students. If the aim is English, we should not push too much"*

The last problem in relation to assessment is the lack of an assessment system to evaluate students' class performance. Regarding the problem, it has been proposed by instructors to adopt a system that allows to evaluate students' classroom performances.

Instructor 8: *" We should be able to give CPG (class performance grade) to the student. This is necessary to assess students' participation in the class."*

Last, problems concerning the general structure of the curriculum are analyzed under the titles of administrative problems, physical problems and problems as to number and level of students in the classroom. The problems related to the structure of the curriculum are given in Table-5.

Table 5. Problems and solutions related to the general structure of the English preparatory curriculum

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested solution</b>
<b>Physical problems</b>	
Bad sound system	
<b>Problems as to number and level of students in the classroom</b>	
Overcrowding of the classes due to the passing grade	Repeat students should be given the right to take the final exam and mid-term exams even if they don't attend the lessons.
Lack of homogeneous classes in terms of language level	Forming a class by bringing together higher-level students
<b>Administrative problems</b>	
Negative effects of overcrowding of the meetings	Reducing the number of instructors attending the meetings by ensuring their attendance to the meetings in regular turns
Lack of institutionalism that causes inconsistencies in decisions made	Decisions should be questioned and the reasons for the decisions taken should be shared with all department members.
High course load of instructors	

As can be seen in the Table-5, bad sound system used for listening activities in classrooms not only prevents students from performing listening activities effectively but also puts the students at a disadvantage in exams. Instructor 21: *"The sound system of classroom 224 is very bad, we have difficulty in listening to activities and students are victimized in quizzes but it is not repaired."*

In addition, some administrative problems have been diagnosed regarding the general structure of the curriculum.

Instructor 35: *"to talk about me, I teach in 2 classes in FLD and 3 different faculties, additionally. In FLD, my work load is not less than other friends. I'm falling apart. I want a fairer schedule"*

Finally, problems related to number and level of students in classrooms are expressed and solutions are given.

Instructor 12: *"I think the 70 pass grade is a good decision, but for this reason the number of repeat students will increase and the classes will become more crowded. We can encourage them to sign up at the beginning of the year and be prepared for the proficiency exam with their own means without attending the lessons during the year. We can give them the right to take 3 midterms and one final, not just the final exam. Or we can remove the necessity of attendance from repeats as in faculties. "*

## Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study is to explore the problems encountered in the English preparatory curriculum of Eskişehir Osmangazi University Department of Foreign Languages and to propose solutions to these problems according to the opinions of the instructors. In line with the aim of the research, the problems related to the objectives of the curriculum, instructional materials, assessment and evaluation system, and general structure of the curriculum are defined and the solutions are suggested.

The lack of clarity is one of the problems related to objectives of the curriculum. Although the aim of the English preparatory curriculum is determined as the B1 proficiency level (TEPAV, 2105) according to the European language framework, it is not clear exactly which skills and structures the B1 level covers. Therefore, the course book decides the objectives. Similar to this result, Keser & Köse (2019) expresses that although the aim of English preparatory curriculums at higher education level is to prepare students for their departments and the global world, the scope of this aim remains unclear. In addition, no guidelines have been prepared by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) to indicate what criteria meet this objective. The main aim of the education given in the foreign language preparatory class is to "teach the student the basic rules of the foreign language, to improve the vocabulary of foreign languages, to understand what he reads and hears in the foreign language, to enable him to express himself orally and in writing" within the scope of the related regulation of the Higher Education Institutions (YÖK, 2008). However, criteria for this goal should be determined and this confusion regarding the aims of preparatory education curriculum should be eliminated.

Another problem related to the objectives of the preparatory curriculum is that intense content especially for A1 and A2 levels, which prevents the achievement of the objectives. One of the reasons of intense content in is the unrealistic goals set for students. According to the report prepared by TEPAV (2015), most of the students are accepted to preparatory program with A1 or A2 level English since the language proficiency level of the students is not assessed in the university exam. As a result, it is not possible for students to reach the desired B1 qualification level within a year. According to the TEPAV (2015) report, it is impossible for students to reach the B1 qualification level after 8 months of education when the proficiency level of entry into the program is considered. However, since this situation is not always understood, ELT Instructors at universities feel accused by academics and departments of failing to achieve the impossible. In order to overcome this problem, it is necessary to take realistic measures to improve the quality of English courses offered at secondary and high school levels or to make realistic decisions about the objectives and duration of preparatory curriculum at higher education level.

Regarding the problems related to the teaching materials, it seems that the problems result from the fact that additional materials prepared by the coordinators are not complementary to the deficiencies of the book. It is obvious that a course book is a tool in achieving the objectives, and it would not be right to expect a course book to be complete. Therefore, the deficiencies of the book should be compensated by the intervention of the instructors to the activities when necessary or with the supplementary materials provided by the coordinators. According to results of an existing study on textbook adaptation techniques of instructors in a preparatory school at higher education level, instructors have a positive attitude towards adapting the activities in course book. Most common techniques used to adapt the course book are modifying the activities, or adding and activity out and using another one instead (Yalçın, 2016).

Existing studies in higher education preparatory classes also included problems related to course materials. The study conducted by Şen Ersoy & Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu (2015) shows students' concerns about following the course book throughout the entire year. However, contrary to this finding, Karanfil & Aytunga (2019) states that one of the strengths of the course book is that it is suitable for the purposes of the course so following the course book is necessary. In the same study, intense content is expressed as one of the weaknesses of the course book. Similarly, according to the results of the study conducted by Akpur (2017), students find course materials supportive to learning.

Related to the assessment and evaluation processes of the curriculum, opinions were given on the quizzes, mid-term exams, project presentations, writing exams (writing portfolio), and classroom performance evaluation grades. Midterm exams and quizzes are criticized for the fact that in exams, questions assessing language use are less in number than the questions assessing grammar and vocabulary. This may stem from two reasons. Firstly, instructors find grammar and vocabulary questions easy to assess and evaluate compared to the questions that evaluate language use. The second reason is that there may be more grammar and vocabulary-enhancing activities in learning and teaching processes, and these structures should be included in the assessment and evaluation processes.

Related to the former reason, alternative assessment and evaluation techniques may not be found by instructors efficient in terms of time and effort. According to the results of a study on alternative assessment techniques in preparatory curriculum at higher education level demonstrates the concerns related to expanding workload instructors will have cope with. Also, instructors worry about the objectivity of such assessment techniques (Özuslu, 2018).

The latter reason is supported by different studies. The findings of a study conducted by Uysal and Güven, (2018) and Aygün (2017) in the Department of Foreign Languages of Eskişehir Osmangazi University, which is the context of the research, show that grammar-oriented courses affect students' affective characteristics negatively. Similarly, according to the results of a study conducted by Gökdemir (2005) in 5 different universities in Turkey, lessons in preparatory classes are mainly theoretical and students do not find enough opportunity to practice the language. In addition, students are not active in English classes. The courses are consistently teacher-centered, and the students are not assigned tasks related to the course.

Another problem as to midterms and quizzes is that the quizzes are not parallel to the midterms and different quizzes do not match each other. In order to solve this problem, instructors suggest that coordinators should be authorized to give feedback to the exams and make changes in exams when necessary. However, this proposal expands the workload of coordinators who already cope with a heavy workload during the academic year. In addition, the results about the project presentations show that some of the lecturers attach importance to improving grammar and vocabulary rather than speaking skills because they suggest project presentations that start after the students (especially in A1 and A2 proficiency levels) acquire some grammar and vocabulary

knowledge. This finding proves ELT Instructors' belief that grammar and vocabulary is a priority in language learning. However, a teacher should not expect a newly taught rule to be used immediately by the student and should know that each student will go through some language processes, so in this learning process he needs to create opportunities for the student to use the language, make mistakes and learn from these mistakes. In other words, teacher should encourage students to use language communicatively. Given that students can do language analysis when they reach a certain level in the target language, focusing primarily on grammar can be defined as an effort to do the last thing first (Paker, 2012).

Regarding the writing exams, the most common problem is whether or not the same task given in the book is asked during the writing exam. Because when the same task in the book is asked in the exam, students can easily guess it and take the exam by writing and memorizing this paragraph at home. As a result, students get consistently high scores from the writing exams. This issue can be evaluated from two aspects. Firstly, if the aim is to assess the writing skills of the students, the writing exams as such do not exactly assess the progress of the students. Instead of asking the same task in the book, the tasks may be asked to the student with a little change, or one of several tasks may be asked randomly in the exam without informing the students. From the latter point of view, when writing and memorizing the expected paragraph, students are exposed to language and; as a result, language learning takes place. Language learning is a result of effort and exposure. An individual's learning the language will take place at his/her level of exposure to that language (Walberg, Hase & Rasher, 1978). It can be said that the current practice prolongs the student's exposure to language and provides learning.

The present study is significant in terms of exploring the problems that impact negatively upon the learning quality of English language in the higher education institutions and proposing solutions to these problems. On the other hand, more extensive and wide-range studies are needed to solve the problems as to English language learning in preparatory programs at higher education level. In particular, the studies that aim to improve the quality of language learning and teaching at pre-university levels are necessary to overcome the problems related to the objectives of the English language preparatory curricula at higher education level. For this purpose, the researches can be designed in cooperation with the Higher Education Institutions and Turkish Education Ministry.

In addition, students' views are as crucial as the views of instructors in curriculum development process. Therefore, the views of the students may be taken in addition to the views of the teaching staff. Last, wide-range studies done in cooperation with different universities will let the curriculum makers gain different perspectives in this process and support curriculum development process.

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