



## A NEEDS ANALYSIS STUDY FOR PREPARATORY CLASS ELT STUDENTS

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### **Abstract:**

With this study, to have a general understanding of academic needs for the development of speaking skill, the needs of preparatory class university students at an English Language Teaching Department were assessed. Based upon a descriptive research design, an adapted questionnaire with open-ended questions was administered to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students as well as ELT graduates to define their academic needs in speaking courses. The data were analysed by using SPSS, a Statistical Programme for Social Sciences. At the end of the study, it was found out that (1) there should be more aiding materials for speaking courses, and (2) more authentic and interesting activities should be put into practice.

**Keywords:** ESP, EAP, needs analysis, English for specific purposes

### **1. Introduction**

For ETIC (English Teaching Information Centre) (1975), EAP (English for Academic Purposes) is concerned with communication skills necessary for study purposes in formal education settings (as cited in Jordan, 1997). To sum up, EAP which refers to teaching of English with the specific aim of assisting learners to study or to conduct research or even to teach in English language is an international practice of extensive scope (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001). As English is a lingua franca, the demand for teachers of English as a Foreign Language has increased significantly in so many countries. Consequently, ministries of education have started to train EFL teachers in order to improve the quality of English and as a result to catch up with the current scientific and technological developments, as well as to supply global relationships in economic, social and educational fields. Therefore, a proper

understanding of English or competency in using it is a certain requirement for EFL teachers. This need is compensated with prep-classes in which EFL teacher candidates are educated in terms of four language skills and then they effectively continue the following courses in their department next years. As a result, it is important to check the understanding of teacher candidates on the efficiency of their courses in preparatory classes in order to understand their needs. In university settings, candidate teachers are trained on the base of EAP in which programs are situated on language skills needed to perform in the academic context of core subject areas. Besides, EAP instructions involve vocabulary, grammar and language skills based teaching covering reading, writing, listening and speaking as well as pronunciation. Yet, EAP refers to particular needs of students; for instance, a speaking lesson focuses on dialogues on educational contexts or a writing lesson is based on essays. In other words, the aim of an EAP program is to support students with developing their language skills so that they become more competent in their subject specific courses.

EAP refers to means of setting instruction in recognition of the cognitive, social, and linguistic requirements of specific academic disciplines. This moves the instructors beyond preparing students to study in English to forming new types of literacy such as supplying them with the communicative skills to take part in specific academic and cultural settings (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). Surely, academic success is not attained only by language competence; however, the language competence is the initial point of reaching the academic goals. Shing and Sim (2011) state that the layout and practice of any EAP course curriculum should take various language needs of the learners into account. Certainly, by figuring out learners' language needs, a firm base related to the whole idea of implementing the specific language courses could be formed. By knowing this primary knowledge, the overall process of developing the curriculum from setting the course objectives to choosing the course contents and learning activities can easily be maintained. This contributes to highly successful courses which give way to learners to reach the expected learning outcomes. Implementation of a needs analysis is the preliminary stage of piling data on the learners' language needs. Besides, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) put forward that having an understanding of the target situation requiring the need to communicate in English distinguishes the ESP student from the EAP student. In the EAP program the students' needs are simple in which they need to gain the linguistic proficiency required to deal with academic practices in the humanities, a definite and easily detectable field for which specific skills are needed to be promoted in specific ways. With all these in mind this very particular study focuses on finding out the perspectives of the prep-class

ELT students on their speaking courses to have a general understanding of their needs for the development of their speaking skill.

## **2. Needs Analysis**

Needs analysis is the preliminary stage of designing courses, syllabuses, materials and the sort of educational activities that take place (Jordan, 1997). Needs analysis is a significant factor that should be discovered and negotiated in language teaching programs. Based on this issue, an EAP program ought to be set on both checking students' purposes and assessing their needs as well (Rostami and Zafarghandi, 2014). The results of the needs analysis support instructors to define the students' professional needs in terms of language skills, as well as their deficiencies in the area of language skills. Upon examining the students' needs and specifying the language course objectives, materials meeting the needs of the students might be chosen for instance. Therefore, needs analysis is the base on which curriculum content, teaching materials and methods are constructed. This gives way to enhancing the students' motivation and achievement as a result (Otilia, 2015). Needs analysis has several sub-branches according to the aim and function of the analysis. It covers target situation analysis, present situation analysis, deficiency analysis, strategy analysis and means analysis, etc. (Jordan, 1997). Here in our study we implemented a target situation needs analysis. Target situation needs analysis was designed and implemented by several scholars in the field, one of which is Munby (1978) for instance. This approach is based on the students' needs at the end of the course program as well as the target level of the students. At the end of this model, the outcome is the profile of the learners' language needs (Jordan, 1997). To sum up, needs analysis is the systematic data collection and examining of all subjective and objective information required to describe and validate curriculum goals that support the language learning needs of learners within the context of the institutions that affect the learning and teaching situation (Brown, 2006).

## **3. Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to find out the needs of ELT students in terms of their speaking skill development in preparatory classes. In order to clarify the needs of the ELT students with regard to their speaking development in preparatory classes, the perceptions of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students as well as ELT graduates towards the efficiency of speaking courses, beside their contentment on the learning process were investigated. The 1<sup>st</sup> class students were excluded in the study to see more about the impact of

preparatory class on the pursuing courses in the following years so that they might have more clear ideas after the 1<sup>st</sup> class. To clarify the study, the answers were sought to the following research question:

How do the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students and ELT graduates perceive the efficiency of the speaking courses in ELT preparatory classes in terms of their speaking needs?

More specifically,

- a) Are the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students and ELT graduates content with having taken the speaking course in the preparatory classes, with regard to their speaking needs?
- b) What are the perceptions of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students and ELT graduates on the use of course materials and opportunities needed in the speaking courses in the preparatory classes?
- c) What are the perceptions of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students and ELT graduates on the need of individual and group work studies in speaking courses to develop their speaking skill in the preparatory classes?
- d) What are the perceptions of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students and ELT graduates on the efficiency of the overall speaking program in terms of meeting their speaking needs?
- e) To what extent did the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students and ELT graduates meet their expectations at the end of the course program, in terms of supplying their speaking needs?
- f) What are the perceptions of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students and ELT graduates on the use of the needed speaking skill in their own classrooms or in other settings?

#### **4. Significance of the Study**

This study points out the perspectives of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students and ELT graduates on the efficiency of speaking courses in developing their speaking skill. The findings will have great value as an exploratory study on the needs analysis for preparatory class ELT students for enhancing the success of the program. Furthermore, the findings will stand as a data-base for the Department of Foreign Languages in terms of specifying the needs of the ELT students taking speaking courses, and as a result for the development of the speaking course programs. Besides, the findings of the study will be a guide for ELT instructors in their attitude towards teaching the required speaking skill. Finally, this study is expected to encourage further studies about the subject of teaching English for academic purposes and to assist other researchers in

determining other alternative research designs, data collection methods and subject selection.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Participants

The participants in this study were the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class ELT students studying in Çukurova University as well as ELT graduates from the same institution. The sample consists of 120 ELT students and 30 ELT graduates who voluntarily participated in the study. 44 of the participants were male, while 106 of them were female. Besides, 30 participants from each class as well as 30 graduates were chosen for the study and the high school type they graduated from displayed diversities: 124 participants from Anatolian High School, 3 participants from Vocational High School, 7 participants from Private High School, 12 participants from Foreign Languages High School, 2 participants from High Schools Abroad, and 2 participants from Distance Education High School. In selecting the participants, the convenience sampling method was used as the target population was too large, and therefore not accessible. The mother tongue of the participants is Turkish and the participants enter the university by taking the university entrance exams applied in Turkey, in which only reading skill as well as grammar and vocabulary knowledge is tested. Furthermore, regarding why they learn English, the participants declared various reasons: 117 indicating the reason *for their future career*, 17 indicating the reason *for success in English courses*, 9 indicating the reason *for having a certificate at the end of the program*, 7 indicating the reason *for master and doctorate degrees*.

### 5.2 Data Collection Tools

In this study, in order to analyse the needs of the preparatory class ELT students in terms of their speaking skill development, perceptions towards the speaking courses by means of an adapted questionnaire with open ended questions were used. That's to say, this study is conducted having resource to descriptive research design with a view to clarify the needs of preparatory class ELT students through identifying the perspectives of those already having finished the speaking course. The data were collected from a group of ELT students at Çukurova University in Adana, Turkey, as well as from a group of ELT graduates from the same university. The questionnaire with open-ended questions was directly administered to the target group by the researcher after being translated into the participants' native language Turkish in order to guarantee the students' full comprehension of the items included. The adapted questionnaire from the

study of Kocaman and Balcıođlu (2013) as well as the study of Yılmaz (2004) included 30 questions with multiple options so that students can choose the answers true for them. Besides, open-ended questions adapted from the study of Hutchinson and Waters (1987) were also used to supply the students with an opportunity to express their views freely. Based upon a descriptive research design, this study involves the data analysis of descriptive statistics. In this sense, SPSS 20.0, a Statistical Program for Social Sciences was administered to report the ELT students' and ELT graduates' viewpoints in numerical data. In order to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire, mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) was used as a statistical technique to find out the rate of agreement related to the items. The assumption of normality was tested via examining Kolmogorov-Smirnova suggesting that normality was a reasonable assumption while Cronbach's Alpha was used suggesting that the questionnaire was highly reliable. Responds from 150 participants from Çukurova University were used in the analysis made. Finally, the open ended questions were analysed according to frequencies of mentioned views.

## 6. Data Analysis and Results

In the following section, one-way Anova results according to class factor are described based on the findings. Besides, the results of the study and the findings are described based on the data obtained from the participants by means of the instruments. The results and the findings are described based on the related research questions as well.

**Table 1:** One way Anova results according to class factor

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.786	4	.696	3.374	.011
Within Groups	29.929	145	.206		
Total	32.715	149			

By looking at the questionnaire regarding the effect of five different groups on the participants' perspectives on speaking skill, it was seen that there was significant effect on the perspectives since  $p < .05$  level [ $F(4, 145) = 3.374, p = .011$ ]. So, it may be said that there is an effect of class factor on the perspectives of the students. So, post-hoc test was administered and it was seen that there was a significant difference between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> classes.

## 6.1 Results pertaining to the Contentment of the Speaking Course in terms of Speaking Needs

In the questionnaire, there are 3 items related to results pertaining to the contentment of the speaking courses, the aim of which is to specify the perspectives of the ELT students and graduates. Table 2 clarifies the results pertaining to the contentment of speaking courses.

**Table 2:** Contentment with Speaking Courses with regard to Speaking Needs

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I am content with having taken a speaking course in preparatory class as it responded to my speaking needs.	150	3.58	.76137
2. I believe that preparatory class is helpful in responding to my speaking needs.	150	3.21	.87152
3. As it did not meet my speaking needs, the speaking course in preparatory class made me get bored.	150	1.82	.90299
Valid N (listwise)	150		

Table 2 indicates that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for the 1<sup>st</sup> item regarding *I am content with having taken a speaking course in preparatory class as it responded to my speaking needs* is 3.58. This score means that Item 1 is the most agreed item by the participants. The participants totally agree about this item. By looking at the 2<sup>nd</sup> item regarding *I believe that preparatory class is helpful in responding to my speaking needs*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score is 3.21 which means that the participants agree with the item. However, when we look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> item with regard to *As it did not meet my speaking needs, the speaking course in preparatory class made me get bored*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score is 1.82 referring that they totally disagree about the item.

## 6.2 Results Pertaining to the Materials and Opportunities Needed in the Speaking Course

In the questionnaire, there are 4 items pertaining to the materials and opportunities needed in speaking courses, the aim of which is to specify the perspectives of the ELT students and graduates. Table 3 clarifies the results pertaining to the materials and opportunities needed in speaking courses.

**Table 3:** Materials and Opportunities Needed in Speaking Courses

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
4. The audio and visual materials were effective in the speaking course.	150	2.86	.91248
5. The extra materials in the speaking course were sufficient in the preparatory class.	150	2.78	.96147
6. Having some part of the speaking course in language laboratory when we were in preparatory class aided my speaking needs.	150	2.33	1.16818
7. We had some part of the speaking course in language laboratory when we were in preparatory class.	150	1.70	1.01364
Valid N (listwise)	150		

Table 3 reveals that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for the 4<sup>th</sup> item regarding *The audio and visual materials were effective in the speaking course* is 2.86 while the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for the 5<sup>th</sup> item regarding *The extra materials in the speaking course were sufficient in the preparatory class* is 2.78 which means that these two items are the most agreed items by the participants. On the other hand, the 6<sup>th</sup> item stating *Having some part of the speaking course in language laboratory when we were in preparatory class aided my speaking needs* has the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of 2.33 which points out that the participants do not agree about this



item. At the same time, with the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of 1.70, the item 7 with regard to *We had some part of the speaking course in language laboratory when we were in preparatory class* is the least agreed item by the participants in this category.

### 6.3 Results pertaining to the Need of Individual and Group Works in the Speaking Course

In the questionnaire, there are 5 items pertaining to the need of individual and group works in speaking courses, the aim of which is to specify the perspectives of the ELT students and graduates. Table 4 clarifies the results pertaining to the need of individual and group works in speaking courses.

**Table 4:** The Need of Individual and Group Works in Speaking Courses

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
8. I liked working in small groups in the speaking course.	150	3.15	.83334
9. The students developed cooperative relationships with each other in the speaking course.	150	3.07	.81180
10. I preferred to work with a partner in the speaking course.	150	3.07	.92755
11. Other students helped me in speaking courses.	150	2.83	.85465
12. I preferred to work alone in the speaking course.	150	2.48	1.06007
Valid N (listwise)	150		

Table 4 shows that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for the 8<sup>th</sup> item regarding *I liked working in small groups in the speaking course* is 3.15. Besides, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for the item 9 regarding *The students developed cooperative relationships with each other in the speaking course* and the mean score for the item 10 regarding *I preferred to work with a partner in the speaking course* are equal as 3.07 while the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for the 11<sup>th</sup> item regarding

*Other students helped me in speaking courses* is 2.83. These scores means that these 4 items are agreed by the participants, though the 12<sup>th</sup> item regarding *I preferred to work alone in the speaking course* is not agreed by the participant.

#### 6.4 Results pertaining to Efficiency of the Speaking Course in terms of Meeting the Speaking Needs

In the questionnaire, there are 18 items pertaining to the efficiency of the speaking course in terms of meeting the speaking needs of the students, the aim of which is to specify the perspectives of the ELT students and graduates. Table 5 clarifies the results pertaining to the efficiency of the speaking course in terms of meeting the speaking needs.

**Table 5:** Efficiency of the Speaking Course in terms of Meeting the Speaking Needs

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
13. I was guided and supported enough in speaking courses.	150	3.19	.84898
14. The directions were clear in speaking courses.	150	3.18	.81158
15. The proper feedback helped my learning in speaking courses.	150	3.16	.81166
16. The interaction was efficient in speaking courses.	150	3.15	.88033
17. The activities done by the whole class were effective for my learning in speaking courses.	150	3.14	.84369
18. We were informed before testing and evaluation of speaking courses.	150	3.13	.84874
19. We were encouraged enough to participate in the speaking courses.	150	3.11	.87114

20. We were informed about the content of the speaking course at the beginning of the term.	150	3.07	.95606
21. It was easy to follow the instructor in the speaking course.	150	3.07	.83623
22. We had equal chances in speaking courses.	150	3.06	.9715
23. Enough motivation was provided in speaking courses.	150	3.05	.88830
24. The time was used effectively in speaking courses.	150	3.02	.87830
25. Various activities were done in speaking courses.	150	3.00	.84739
26. The methods used in the instruction process were effective for our learning in speaking courses.	150	2.99	.87850
27. Students gave each other feedbacks in speaking courses.	150	2.79	.98510
28. Lesson hours of speaking courses in preparatory class were enough.	150	2.60	.98918
29. The instructor taught in interesting ways in speaking courses.	150	2.60	.98988
30. The number of the students in speaking courses helped my	150	2.54	.97338

learning.

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Valid N (listwise)      150

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All the items related to the efficiency of the speaking courses in terms of meeting the speaking needs of the students suggest that the participants all agree with the items. That's to say, Table 5 signifies the overall acceptance of the items regarding the efficiency of speaking courses.

### 6.5 Results pertaining to the Open-ended Questions

Remarks, codes and frequencies from answers of the students to the open-ended questions were given in Table 6. That's to say, Table 6 illustrates the perspectives of the students related to speaking skill.

**Table 6:** Students' View Related to Speaking Skill

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Remarks of Students</b>
Expectations from the speaking course in preparatory class	61	<i>To be able to communicate through English effectively and fluently.</i>
	8	<i>Our speech mistakes should be tolerated and we shouldn't be afraid of talking.</i>
The extent of meeting the expectations in preparatory class	38	<i>I have highly/sufficiently met my expectations.</i>
	35	<i>I have hardly/never met my expectations.</i>
How are you learning speaking?/How would you learn it better?	25	<i>We should do various interesting activities based on more speaking practices to provide interactive</i>
	10	<i>participation.</i>
The materials available for the speaking course.	14	<i>We should communicate with native speakers.</i>
	11	<i>Computers, projectors, video, cd players.</i>
	40	<i>Course books.</i>
With whom, where, when and how		No sources were available.

the speaking skill will be used.	24	<i>I use/will use the speaking skill when communicating with my students at school.</i> <i>I use/will use the speaking skill when I go abroad or communicate with foreign speakers.</i>
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By looking at the results of open-ended questions, we can easily see that most of the participants expect to be able to communicate through English effectively and fluently, while some of others imply that their speech mistakes should be tolerated and they shouldn't be afraid of talking in speaking courses. Regarding the extent of meeting their expectations in the preparatory class, most of them have highly/sufficiently met their expectations while another group at almost the same frequency have hardly/never met their expectations. Besides, most of the participants put forward that they should make various interesting activities based on more speaking practice to provide interactive participation, while some stated that they should communicate with native speakers. Furthermore, in terms of the materials available for the speaking course, most of the participants made a list of such sources as computers, projectors, video and cd players while some of them implied they had no materials to use. Finally, referring to the use of speaking skill in real life most of the participants have suggested that they use/will use the speaking skill when communicating with their students at school. On the other hand, some of them have declared that they use/will use the speaking skill when I go abroad or communicate with foreign speakers.

## **7. Discussion and Conclusion**

There are a number of skills that cannot be properly learnt unless a more academic attitude is located in the language programs. If so, an adjustment of the language teaching courses towards a more precise academic scope is offered as a possible answer for supplying learners with a specialised structure related to demands, necessities and objectives of their field of studies (Vinuesa, 2015). In this needs analysis study, the needs of the preparatory class ELT students were tried to be figured out by means of the perceptions of those already finished the speaking course. It was understood that the aim of the majority of the respondents learning speaking skill was for their future career. Besides, it is so satisfactory that the respondents, being content with having taken the course and knowing the importance of taking it in the preparatory class,

know exactly where, when, how and with whom they will use the language. Furthermore, the conclusions rooted from the perspectives of the students are as in the followings;

- The participants are content with having taken the speaking course in preparatory class, in terms of meeting their speaking needs.
- Authentic materials are among the most significant means instructors should employ in classroom setting to make their instruction go well and be adequate in conveying the required data to each learner (Al Azri and Al-Rashdi, 2015). Regarding the materials and opportunities needed in speaking courses, the participants stated that the materials were efficiently used in their speaking courses. However, the participants declared negative views in terms of not having a speaking laboratory and the desire to use it. Furthermore a number of the participant declared that they have computers, projectors, videos and Cd players available for their courses, while some of them have mentioned the course books being the only materials available for the course. On the other hand, a group of the respondents complained about the lack of speaking sources for their courses.
- Group work is generally employed to assist the learners to rehearse their verbal skills as well as in teaching them to work together (Krogstad, 2011). Participants indicated very positive views of studying in groups, by indicating that group works aid their learning as well as being more advantageous. On the other hand, the respondents presented very negative views on working individually.
- It has been clearly understood from the analysis that the overall perception of the participants as to the efficiency of the program is adequate. However, a number of the respondents have declared that they should do various interesting activities based on more speaking practices to provide interactive participation. In language learning, the most required skill is speaking. So, instructors should do their best to supply learners with the best speaking practices needed. The aim of a speaking class should be to stimulate the learning of communication skills and to promote authentic communication in and out of the classroom setting (Shojaee, n.d.).
- More than half of the respondents state that they have met their expectations; while a group with a slightly smaller number of respondents put forward that they have hardly or never met their expectations as a result of their low speaking success.
- A high number of the participants state that they will use speaking skill when communicating with their students at school, while some respondents present

that they will use speaking skill when they go abroad or communicate with foreign speakers.

After this very specific needs analysis, the following suggestions were structured;

- There should be more alternative materials for speaking courses.
- Interactive group works should be encouraged a lot, since it was seen in the study that the students disfavoured working individually.
- Although the sufficiency of the speaking courses was declared as adequate by the majority of the respondents, more authentic and interesting activities should be put into practice to maintain the success of the course.
- In order to meet the expectations of those unpleasant about the program, some precautions to assist learning should be employed by providing a stress free setting in which bad emotions of the learners are hindered.

### **About the author**

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