

Sector Interview Report: 2014-2015

This research study aims to gather information about the perceptions of METU graduates and their employers regarding the English language competence of the METU graduates working in the sector. The research questions are:

1. From the perspective of the graduates:
 - a. What are their strengths and weaknesses in their use of English in the work environment?
 - b. What do they think about the English language education they have received at METU?
 - c. What are their suggestions to improve the English competence of METU students before graduation?
2. From the perspective of the employers:

What are METU graduates' language strengths and weaknesses in their use of English in the work environment?

Methodology

Participants: METU Graduates

Forty METU graduates were interviewed for the study. Convenience sampling was used to contact and interview METU graduates. The graduates were selected from the classes of 2003 to 2014 (*including one graduate of February 2015). Figure 1 shows the distribution of the participant graduates according to the year of their graduation. As seen in the figure, more than one fifth of these participants (N=9) were 2011 graduates.

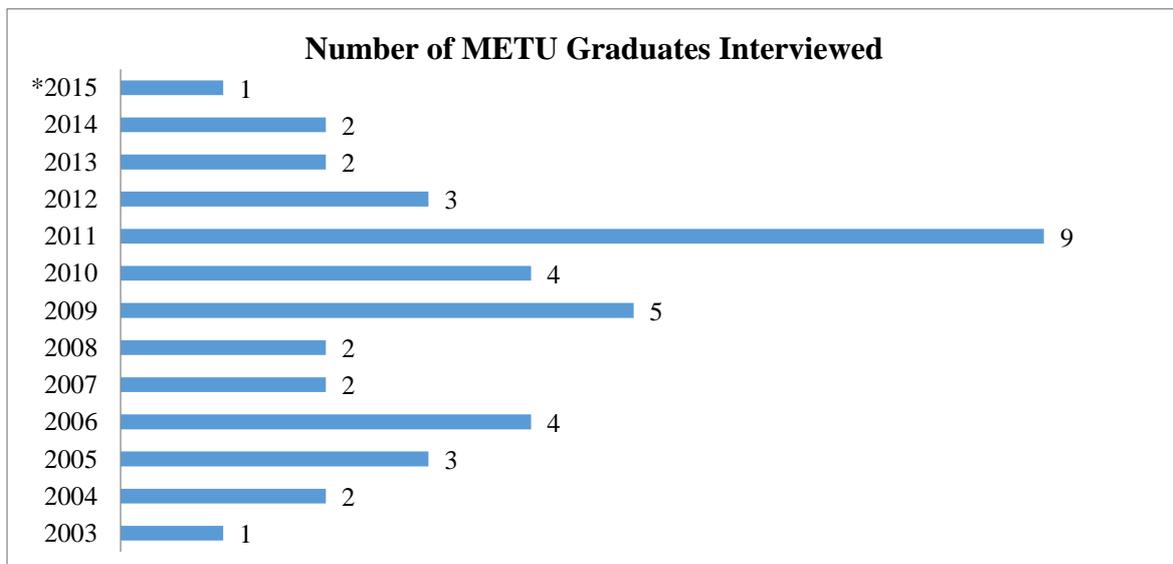


Figure 1: Distribution of the Participant METU Graduates according to Graduation Year

The participants' experience in service after graduation varies between 2 months to 12 years. Twenty-three of the participant graduates were female and 17 were male. Four of the five METU faculties were represented in the interview sampling. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the participant METU graduates according to faculties. The highest number of participants was the graduates of the Faculty of Engineering (N= 24; 60%), which represents the student distribution at METU as this Faculty constitutes 52% of undergraduate students. The Faculty of Education, however, was not represented in the study because the graduates of this faculty mostly work as teachers of Chemistry, Computer, Early Childhood, Mathematics, Physics, and Physical Education in Turkish-medium primary and secondary schools where an English language need was not observed. The Department of Foreign Language Education was also excluded from the study.

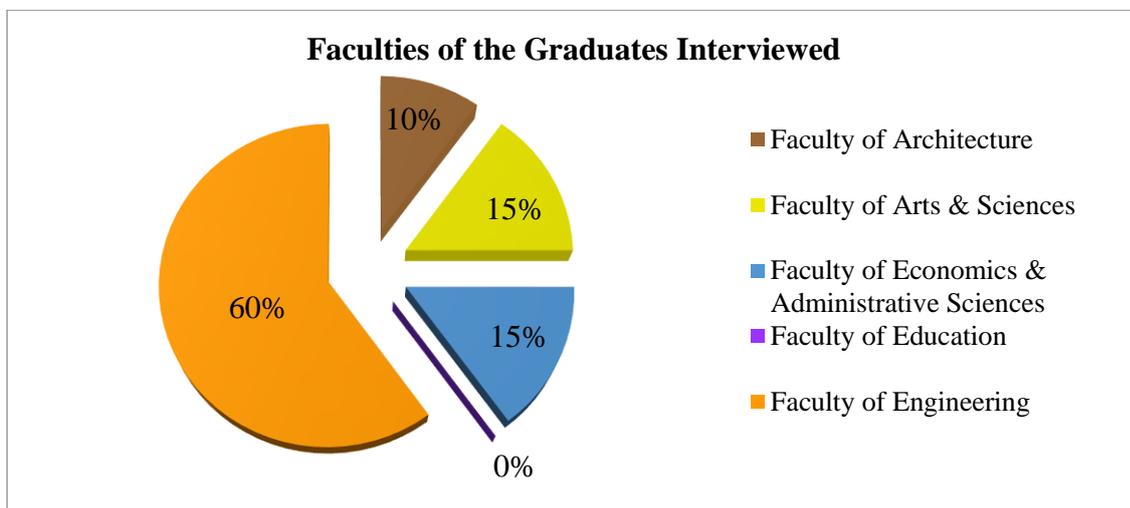


Figure 2: Distribution of the Participant METU Graduates according to Faculties

Thirty-seven of the 40 participant graduates spent a year in the English Preparatory School before starting their undergraduate education. Ten continued onto a graduate program either at METU, or at another university in Turkey or abroad after graduation. Eleven of the interviewed graduates were employed in a state institution, 17 of them were hired in the private sector, and the rest were working in a quasi-public enterprise. The work places were further coded as “*limited*” and “*intense*” English use contexts. In intense use contexts, the employees used all four language skills actively. Three conditions were classified as “limited used contexts”: (1) employees used only some language skills intensely, (2) employees used language skills moderately or from time to time, and (3) how much language was used varied from department to department at the workplace. Table 1 shows the distribution of the participant METU graduates, their departments, graduation year, work place and position.

Table 1: Interview Group: METU Graduates

METU Graduates as Employees	Undergraduate Department/Faculty	Preparatory School Education	Graduation Year	MA/PhD	Work Place/English Use	Position
1.	Psychology/ Faculty of Arts and Sciences	√	2011		Private/ Limited	Psychologist
2.	Statistics Faculty of Arts & Sciences	√*	2007	MA in EE 2013	Private/ Limited	Sales Manager
3.	Statistics/ Faculty of Arts & Sciences	√	2006		Quasi- Public/ Limited	Human Resource Specialist
4.	History/ Faculty of Arts & Sciences	√	2005		State/ Limited	Program Coordinator
5.	Mathematics/ Faculty of Arts & Sciences	√*	2010		Private/ Limited	Specialist
6.	Physics/ Faculty of Arts & Sciences	√*	2009	PhD in Progress	Quasi- Public/ Limited	Optical Engineer
7.	International Relations/ Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences	√	2012		State/ Limited	Vice-Specialist
8.	Political Science & Public Administration/ Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences	√*	2010		Private/ Intense	Specialist
9.	Political Science & Public Administration/ Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences	√	2010		Private/ Limited	Specialist
10.	Business Administration/ Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences	√	2013		Private/ Limited	Specialist
11.	International Relations/ Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences	√*	2011		Private/ Limited	Specialist
12.	Business Administration/ Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences	√*	2009		Private/ Limited	Specialist
13.	City & Regional Planning/ Faculty of Architecture	√*	2009	PhD in Progress	State/ Limited	Specialist
14.	City & Regional Planning/ Faculty of Architecture	√*	2007	PhD in progress	State/ Limited	Specialist
15.	Architecture/ Faculty of Architecture	√	2005		Private/ Intense	Architect
16.	Architecture/ Faculty of Architecture	X	2003		Private/ Intense	Architect
17.	Chemistry Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2004		State/ Limited	Coordinator
18.	Food Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2006		State/ Limited	Coordinator
19.	Chemistry Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2004		State/ Limited	Coordinator

20.	Computer Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√*	2014		Private/ Intense	Software Engineer
21.	Computer Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2006		Private/ Intense	Software Engineer
22.	Electrical & Electronics Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2013		Private/ Intense	Design Engineer
23.	Electrical & Electronics Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2010		Private/ Intense	Sales Manager
24.	Electrical & Electronics Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√*	2014		Private/ Intense	Sales Engineer
25.	Computer Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	X	2011		Quasi-Pub/ Limited	Software Engineer
26.	Electrical & Electronics Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2008		Quasi-Pub/ Limited	Software Engineer
27.	Electrical & Electronics Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	X	2008		Quasi-Pub/ Limited	Software Engineer
28.	Environmental Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2012		State/ Intense	
29.	Environmental Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√*	2009		State/ Intense	Environmental Engineer
30.	Geological Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2011	MA in USA	State/ Intense	
31.	Mining Engineering Faculty of Engineering	√*	2009	MA in IE	Private/ Intense	Sales Engineer
32.	Civil Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√*	2006		Private/ Intense	Project Manager
33.	Civil Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2011		Private/ Intense	Design Manager
34.	Industrial Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√*	2012		Quasi- Public/ Limited	Production Planning Engineer
35.	Geological Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2005	MA in USA	State/ Intense	
36.	Chemistry Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2011		Private/ Intense	Logistics Manager
37.	Food Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√*	2011	MA in progress	Private/ Intense	R&D
38.	Computer Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√*	2011		Private/ Limited	Software Engineer
39.	Mechanical Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√*	2015	MA	Private/ Limited	Project Engineer
40.	Aerospace Engineering/ Faculty of Engineering	√	2011	MA in AE	Private/ Limited	Project Engineer

* The asterisk shows the graduates who studied in DBE at their own will.

Participants: Employers and Supervisors

Fourteen employers/ supervisors from 12 institutions were interviewed for the study. A combination of convenience and purposive sampling was addressed to contact and interview these employers, according to three major criteria: (1) the interviewed employers are familiar with a relatively large group of METU graduates according to the size of their firm/company/enterprise, (2) they have administrative positions or have a role in the recruitment process, and (3) they represent the work fields in which METU graduates are generally employed. Of 14 employers, seven have a managerial position, while three of them are supervisors, three are the owners of their own firm and one was freelance. Eleven of the 14 employers are METU graduates, which was not intentionally planned but a result of the convenience sampling. The institutions have different organizational principles: One of them is a state institution, three of them are quasi-public enterprises, and the rest are private corporations. Four of these work environments have intense international connections either because of working in multinational contexts or because of having branches in different parts of the world. The others have limited international links and/or limited chance of contact with speakers of other languages. Seven of these institutions require their employees to bring an English proficiency score in TOEFL and/or IELTS for admission, while in four, being a METU graduate is considered a sufficient indicator of English proficiency. Table 2 below shows the distribution of the participant employers/ supervisors and their institutions:

Table 2: Interview Group: Employers/ supervisors

Company	Number of Employers Interviewed	Foundation	English Use	Proficiency Test Requirement
1.	3 (all METU Graduates; all executive managers)	Private	International Links depending on the department	Must for admission
2.	1 (METU Graduate; manager)	Private (Global Company)	Limited English use	Must for admission
3.	1 (METU Graduate; managers)	Private	Limited English use	Must for admission
4.	1 (METU Graduate)	State	Limited English use	Must for admission
5.	1 (METU Graduate; Company Owner)	Private	Intense English use	Not tested: Being a METU graduate was considered to be enough
6.	1 (Supervisor)	Private	Intense English use	Must for admission
7.	1 (Supervisor)	Quasi-Public Enterprise	Limited English use	Not tested: Being a METU graduate was considered to be enough
8.	1 (METU Graduate; Company Owner)	Private	Limited English use	Not tested: Being a METU graduate was considered to be enough
9.	1 (METU Graduate)	Private	Abroad	Must for admission
10.	1 (Supervisor)	Quasi-Public Enterprise	Limited English use	Must for admission
11.	1 (METU Graduate; manager)	Private	Intense English use	Must for admission
12.	1 (METU Graduate, Manager)	Private	Limited English use	Not tested: Being a METU graduate was considered to be enough

Data Collection

There were six researchers on the interview team, and all the interviews were carried out by two researchers. While the questions were prepared, the questions used in the previous program evaluation conducted in 2003 were reviewed. The interview was piloted by a team of R&D researchers at Modern Languages Department (MLD). Ethics committee approval was granted. Based on the reflections on the pilot interviews, the R&D team decided not to record the interviews. Instead, while one of the researchers asked the questions, the other took notes. These notes were summarized based on the research questions and were emailed

to the participants for approval, which is one of the methods adopted to achieve reliability in the study. The interviews were conducted in Turkish and the notes were translated during data analysis. To achieve translation reliability, two experts were involved when the researcher believed that the original meaning may be lost in translation. These translations were then proofread and reviewed by a native speaker.

Graduate Interview

A semi-structured interview, composed of five demographic information questions and ten open-ended content questions, was used to collect data (Appendix A). There were follow-up questions for some of the questions. The interviews were conducted individually, in pairs, or in triads according to the schedule of the METU graduates who participated in the study. All except three were conducted face to face. Due to the location of the graduates, two of the interviews were emailed to graduates, and one was conducted over the phone. The interviews were planned to last 30 minutes; however, in some cases they extended to an hour in length.

The first question of the questionnaire was which English language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) were needed in their work environment. The following four questions specifically investigated how each of these language skills was individually addressed in work life and how successful/unsuccessful the graduates found themselves to be in that skill. The sixth question was whether their current institution provided any opportunities and/or in-service language improvement programs to help their employees improve English language skills and whether METU graduates did/had to attend these training activities. Question 7 was about how often and how much the graduates interacted and communicated with native speakers of English and/or non-Turkish speakers in their profession, and which language skills they used to be successful in those exchanges, including tolerating cultural differences, working in teams in multi-cultural contexts, and understanding non-standard accents. Questions 8 and 9 inquired whether the graduates talked with their colleagues and other METU graduates about the English language education at METU and their level of English, and if so, what information they had obtained from them. The final question asked the participant graduates to report anything they would bring up if they attended a meeting with the instructors at the Departments of Basic English and Modern Languages.

Employer/ Supervisor Interview

A semi-structured interview, composed of four demographic information questions and ten open-ended content questions, was used to collect data (Appendix B). There were follow-up questions for some of these questions. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and individually with the exception of one (in triads) according to the schedule of the employers who participated in the study. The interview sessions were planned to last 30 minutes; however, in some cases they extended to an hour in length.

The four demographic questions in the interview were asked to understand the context of the employer and the nature of the institution, and these questions include the number of employees they have, the number of METU graduates they have hired in recent years, the number of non-Turkish speakers, the positions METU graduates have in those institutions/ firms/ companies, the way English proficiency is tested to hire candidates, and whether being a METU graduate is an advantage during the hiring processes.

The first interview question focused on the English language skills needed in their work environment. Questions 2 to 5 were about the use of language skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing, and the strengths and weaknesses of METU graduates in using those skills. The sixth question was whether the institution provided any opportunities and/or in-service language improvement programs to help their employees improve their English language skills and whether METU graduates did/had to attend these training activities. The seventh question was on the importance of cultural aspects in communicating with non-Turkish parties and how the cultural differences were tolerated. Questions 8 and 9 inquired if the employers ever talked with their employees about the English education at METU and if so what information they had obtained from them. The final question asked the participants to report anything they would bring up if they attended a meeting with the instructors teaching at the Department of Basic English and Department of Modern Languages.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis method was used to analyse the data. The data was read multiple times with a focus on the research questions and recurring themes were identified and coded through MAXQDA. Two researchers were involved in the coding process. The initial codes were identified by the first researcher by coding 22 of the interviews. Then, the first researcher used this set of codes to analyse a different interview using thinking aloud as the second researcher listened. After the think aloud, they discussed the codes. Next, the second researcher coded data independently and

the second researcher went over the codes. They again negotiated the codes. Since there were not any disagreements, they continued coding the data independently, communicating when graduate comments were not very clear. In the clustering stage of the similar codes, the two researchers were involved. When relevant, the frequencies were counted. To further increase reliability, an expert was asked to read and evaluate the findings and discussion parts of the study.

Findings

In this part of the report, the significant findings of the study are presented under the identified themes. When relevant, representative quotations are provided. The square brackets in the direct quotations indicate additions by the researcher to clarify meaning.

Graduate Interview

Tasks and Skills at the Workplace

Tasks emerging only once were highly specific to the position of the participant graduate, so they were not included in the report. One example would be reading CVs and letters of intent (from a HR specialist). It should also be noted that the interviewed graduates were asked to list the most commonly used tasks, and since they were not provided with a list, the frequencies for some tasks would be higher if they had been asked to tick from a list.

Reading

Participant graduates reported that they read emails (N=23), field-related resources/literature (N=21), tenders and related documents (N=7), documents about products such as catalogues (N=5) and project documents (N=4).

Overall, participant graduates believed that their reading skills were quite satisfactory in fulfilling the tasks listed above. Indeed, reading skills were reported to be the most effectively developed skill during their education at METU. Only three of them said that they had some difficulties in reading, and they explained that the reason for this was their limited vocabulary. They coped with this mostly by using dictionaries. One of them (G1) was not satisfied with his/ her reading skills. G1 said that s/he found it challenging to read advanced level academic articles and preferred to read Turkish resources when available.

Writing

Emails (N=23), reports (N=8), formal transactions (N=6), project related documents (N=5) and international transactions (N=5) were reported to be the most frequent writing tasks. Three graduates stated that they did translations.

Sixteen of the interviewed graduates said that their writing skills were sufficient. Structures learnt at school (N=3), having done plenty of writing in their departments (N=2), knowing synonyms (N=1) and strong grammar (N=1) were given as strengths in writing. On the other hand, 16 of them felt that their writing skills were in need of further development. Seven of these expressed the need to improve their formal writing skills, and five had problems due to their limited vocabulary knowledge. Two of them (G18 and G20) complained that the vocabulary they used when writing was simple:

We are not using rich vocabulary. We keep using the same words. People we exchange emails with write emails richer in vocabulary. We think in Turkish. (G18)

Four participants (G10, G21, G24 and G37) indicated that the writing tasks practised at school did not reflect the writing tasks they needed outside the school:

In the workplace, being concise is very important. A lengthy email can receive negative criticism. At school, rich elaborated writing style is expected. (G37)

Listening

Telephoning (N=12), meetings (N=5), presentations (N=4), job-related videos-presentations (N=5), tele-conferencing (N=2), international fairs (N=2) and translation (N=2) were listed as areas where the interviewed graduates used their listening skills. Six participants stated that their listening skills were sufficient. Familiarity with terminology (N=2) and different accents were reported to aid listening comprehension. On the other hand, the participant graduates raised some concerns about their listening skills and the listening education at METU. Limited vocabulary, loss of concentration, speed of the interlocutor(s) and unfamiliar accent were given as factors that hinder listening comprehension. Three of them said they gradually got used to unfamiliar accents as they continued to interact with foreigners. Three of the participants found British accents problematic. G32's comments on accent were representative of the group:

Accent can be a problem while listening. For instance, on the first day of a meeting, you may find it difficult to understand different accents, and others may find it difficult to understand you. After all, you're not a native-speaker, but generally this problem is eventually overcome.

G32 continued by commenting on different cultural attitudes of interlocutors from different nations:

However, the English are a bit conservative, and sometimes they insist on not understanding. Sometimes they don't like even the American's English. In this sense, it's easier to communicate with the Americans. They're more tolerant.

G35 made a similar comment about the tolerant nature of the Americans. S/he said that when speaking to a foreigner, the Americans speak more slowly. There were further comments about the nature of interaction in international contexts. G26 stated that native speakers simplified their language when speaking to them [non-native speakers]. G24, a non-native speaker of English, pointed out the need for even non-native speakers to adjust their language when interacting in international contexts:

We are doing business in a global world. You don't know the language proficiency of the person you need to communicate with. It's important to be understood correctly. So, I keep the language for communication simple.

There were some criticisms regarding the teaching of listening skills at METU. Five graduates said that the listening materials were poor. The common point of these criticisms was the inauthenticity of the materials.

It isn't really for our benefit to have listened to people speaking with a clear standard accent at school... Listening to high quality recordings isn't an advantage. It's very different to do listening in a chaotic meeting for an hour. Two or more people are speaking at the same time. Whoever says 'excuse me' interrupts. It isn't an isolated perfect recording. (G37)

In real life, people don't speak as they speak in the cassettes and DVDs. You can understand the recordings, but you can't understand what your classmate is talking about. (G7)

There are many international students at METU. We used to listen to the cassettes all the time... Perfect English... It's important to hear different accents. (G19)

There were further comments which linked being exposed to various accents and building confidence.

Countries in the European Union are not all native speakers, and they don't all speak with perfect native accent. For example, Spanish speakers' accent are highly influenced by their native tongue... People shouldn't force themselves too much about accent. There may be mistakes. We're shy [about making mistakes]. These things can be shared with students so that they feel more comfortable [about their own accent]. (G4)

It's important to listen to different accents... Knowing that there are various non-native speaker accents is important to help students become more confident [about their own accent]. It would be good to know this at the beginning. (G18)

Speaking

Telephoning (N=12), meetings (N=12), international assignments (N=8), presentations (N=4), hosting foreign guests (N=8), tele-conferencing (N=2), receptions &

cocktail parties (N=3), and international fairs (N=2) emerged as common areas where graduates spoke English.

Only eight of the graduates were satisfied with their speaking skills; however, these graduates still acknowledged that speaking was the least developed skill at METU. Overall, there were 82 comments indicating a weakness related to speaking. Among these, sixteen participants stated that speaking was the most problematic area, and the majority of these graduates added that this was a common problem among METU graduates. There were five comments stating that education at the university did not develop the speaking skills, and six participants either had taken or were willing to take speaking courses. Graduates were particularly concerned about their lack of fluency in spontaneous speech. G18's comment was representative of graduates' overall evaluation of METU graduates speaking skills:

I haven't met a METU graduate who can speak fluently unless they lived abroad or used language actively.

Graduates further elaborated on the deficiencies in the speaking skills. Thirteen participants indicated that they were not competent in using "daily English" and "social English". The quotations below illustrate what the graduates referred to with "daily English" and "social English":

There is no social language... We did not learn this at METU. (G7)

Due to my position as a sales manager, I don't only use formal or technical English. I also need to make jokes at times. It's important to know such phrases as well. Street language, for instance, idiomatic expressions are important. (G23)

Once I wanted to ask a guest whether s/he wants to drink coffee or tea. While I was thinking about what to say... Should I say 'Would you like some coffee or tea'? A friend jumped in and just said "tea or coffee?" and solved the problem. (G28)

We can speak comfortably at business meetings... even at stressful meetings when there are fierce quarrels, but we are stuck at the dinner table (G32).

Once we went out for dinner. There were three Americans and me. They made a joke and laughed... and I asked myself 'what have I missed? (G34)

On the other hand, four participants stated that they felt the need to further improve their formal speaking skills.

Too much focus on accuracy and grammar and excessive self-monitoring (N=6), limited vocabulary (N=5), and lack of practice opportunities (N=4) emerged as some of the factors that inhibit speaking.

Since there isn't sufficient speaking practice in the Prep School and in the department... and this combined with the fear of making mistakes... there have been times I preferred to remain silent rather than speaking. (G20)

G18, G21 and G40 also indicated that focusing on being grammatically correct was inhibiting their performance.

Because of thinking about grammar, I can't concentrate [and speak]... but I've given up. When we were at METU, we were immediately corrected when we made a mistake while speaking. (G18)

Why can graduates from other universities, including Turkish medium ones, speak, but I can't? Although they know 1000 words, and you know 5000 words, when you don't know how to put words together, you cannot speak. Constructing flawless sentences is not that important when speaking. (G40)

On the other hand, there was also a psychological and emotional dimension of the speaking problem which seemed to be present at school and persist at the workplace. Eleven graduates said that they were afraid of speaking, and seven indicated that they did not have the confidence to speak. G7, a graduate of the Department of International Relations, elaborated on the roots of his/her fear of speaking, and its impact at school and at the workplace:

Everybody is afraid of speaking... I've always been afraid of speaking in English, and I'll continue to feel so.

S/he stated that this shyness may stem from the formal education system in Turkey and may not be attributed to ODTU alone. S/he also referred to how less competent students felt at the presence of students with strong speaking skills.

When we were with TED graduates in class, we used to think "we can't speak when they're here".

S/he added that they used to have their classmates with stronger English ask their questions to the professors. Interestingly, the same problem persisted in the workplace:

This is a common problem in Turkey. We can't speak English when we're with somebody who knows better English. There is the concern that s/he will notice if I make a mistake. Here, you represent the institution. [If you make a mistake], they will think that they have sent a state official who doesn't even know how to speak English... This is a sociological issue. (G7)

G40 also expressed how as a weaker student, s/he felt intimidated in the presence of stronger classmates.

The person next to you is upper [upper-intermediate]. You feel embarrassed and blush when speaking next to him/her.

The imbalance in the perceived competency of the graduates' speaking skills and other skills was striking. With the exception of the eight participants mentioned above, the graduates generally felt competent in reading and writing. For example, G40, quoted above, has published and presented in international contexts. The participants usually explained this discrepancy with reference to individuals' background and prior learning experiences. For example, when answering the interview question 8 (Do you ever have the opportunity to talk to your employees about the English language education at METU and their level of English? If so, what kind of information do they share?), G36 gave the answer below:

Yes, we do. Generally, we agree that we aren't very good. Of course, we think the problem is not only about the university, but it's also related to the high school education. College graduates are way better in English... Strong students either have a good foundation or making an effort themselves.

English Preparatory Program

The results of the demographic questions showed that 37 of the 40 interviewed graduates studied in the Department of Basic English prior to their undergraduate education after they enrolled in METU. Seventeen of these also indicated that they spent one year in the preparatory program of their own will as they did not take the institutional English Proficiency Exam (EPE) or did not answer all the questions in the exam on purpose to study in the preparatory school (shown with an asterisk in Table 1 above). When the comments of the graduates were analysed, it was seen that the graduates refer to their DBE year 59 times in total. Seventeen of the 37 graduates who studied in preparatory school think the program was either sufficient or successful in different aspects from the materials used to the activities done. Specifically, while G8 and G10 mentioned how efficient the pop-quizzes were in helping them study daily, G35 thought the program helped him/her to read and write better and s/he could write more easily because of what s/he learnt in DBE, and G32 was of the opinion that the writing practice was instructive for them. Graduate 39 expressed his/her gratitude to his/her instructor saying that "I learnt half of the vocabulary I know now from my teacher. S/he really helped us improve our speaking as well through [impromptu] speaking activities".

Twelve graduates, on the other hand, criticized the preparatory school education due to different reasons and from different aspects. G13 thought the education was a bit like high school as attendance was not optional. G6 stated his/her listening skills improved during the

summer school but they did not practice it during the previous terms, while G30 indicated s/he did not have any chance to speak during the preparatory year. One of the recent graduates told an anecdote to exemplify his/her level in reading after prep school saying that s/he underlined not the important parts in an article but the parts s/he understood (G9). Five graduates criticized the program stating that the English language education in the preparatory year could have been more challenging. One of those stated that if one studies at METU, his/her English level should be at least upper-intermediate as it is an English-medium school (G16). Seven of the participants criticized the METU English Proficiency Exam because of the following reasons: it was easy to get prepared and pass (G15, G16 and G33), it did not include a speaking component, the skills were tested in isolation, the same exam was used for both undergraduate and graduate programs (G2), and the marking of the open-ended parts in the exam were not very reliable (G1). G40 added, “we got prepared for EPE as we did for the university exam by answering multiple choice questions. This time from Cesur Öztürk’s book. This is not the way it should be. As a result, I have ‘half-English’ not full competence”.

The analysis of the interview data showed that a few participants thought reading texts relevant to their departments (G28 and G37) or studying department specific vocabulary (G30) would be very useful. Other suggestions (N=14) for the preparatory year included having computer assisted language teaching (G1), integrating English education with social activities (G18), and focusing more on writing skills (G31). Nine of the 14 comments suggested having more speaking instruction during the preparatory year saying that presentation skills should be taught (G28 and G34), that speaking should be tested to show its importance (G6), that teaching speaking should be addressed at a higher level (G15), that there should be more speaking tasks (G18 and G23), and that daily spoken English should be addressed (G28 and G31). G1, G21 and G40 also mentioned that raising DBE students’ awareness was crucial as they were not aware of how that one-year English program was important to develop and improve their language skills and to prepare them for their departments. This theme is further explored under the suggestions heading.

Freshman English Program: ENG 101-ENG 102-ENG 211-ENG 311

The analysis of the graduate responses to some of the questions showed 25 references to freshman English classes: ENG 101 and ENG 102. These comments were about the content of ENG 101-102, exemption from ENG 101, standardization of assessment in ENG 101-102 and the level of these courses.

Eighteen comments mentioned an aspect related to the content of ENG 101-102 courses. Five of these indicated that speaking and listening should be much more emphasized in those courses as they needed to practice using those skills outside the classroom, and they had weaknesses in vocabulary size and daily expressions (G19). Although three of the graduates were not sure whether writing essays was relevant to real life work-related tasks and one of them stated that “essay writing skills are more useful for the ones interested in graduate studies” (G1), three of the graduates believed learning how to write essays and how to give citations were the beneficial aspects of ENG 102 (G2, G6 and G21). While one graduate criticized ENG 101 as it did not teach them anything new (G6 and G7), another one complained about both courses, saying that “they were slightly different from what we already knew” (G38). Finally, G19 indicated that the English level in ENG 101 and 102 should be different from the preparatory program classes in order to be more helpful for the students. G26 and G40 criticized the course load and the latter also stated that “ENG 101-102 course load is really heavy and it makes students’ life much more difficult when the course load in the departmental courses is considered”.

Another issue discussed in the graduate interviews was the exemption from the ENG 101 course according to the EPE score. All three participants who referred to this issue were exempt from either one (ENG 101) or both (ENG 101 and 102) of the courses as they had a high score on the EPE. However, none of them thought this had positive effects. G18 believed that s/he had problems in his/her departmental courses as s/he had not taken ENG 101-102. G25 stated that the students should not be exempt from these classes, and all students should write essays as it improved vocabulary development. Similarly, G31 indicated that passing the EPE did not test the skill of writing essays, so being exempt from the courses did not mean the student can write an essay.

Teacher factor in student motivation and standardization also emerged in the ENG 101-102 related data. Three graduates (G8, G20 and G39) believed they failed and had to retake a course due to the negative attitude of the course instructor. G24 mentioned the differences among sections of ENG 101/102 depending on the instructors and how undergraduates tried to enrol in the sections of some teachers while they avoided some other sections. The same comment was given by G39 saying that “selecting the section should depend on the class hours but students try to select sections according to their instructors”.

Nineteen participants stated that they found ENG 211 effective. In Graduate 38’s words “ENG 211 is totally different [in comparison to other MLD courses]. Focusing on speaking and presentation skills makes it different”. In addition to presentation skills, helping

students build confidence (N=2) and introducing skills that can be applied in other tasks (N=2) were listed among the strengths of the course. Some graduates added that when they were taking the course, they thought it was challenging, but in retrospect, they believe that it was worth it. On the other hand, some pointed out that making presentations did not necessarily improve speaking skills. G6, G29, G31, G35 and G37 stated that some students memorized the presentations, and pointed out that the course did not do much in terms of helping students improve their spontaneous speaking skills. G14 said that he remembered students exchanging presentations.

Very few of the participants in the study took ENG 311. Some of them were very positive about the course.

ENG 311 was perfect. It is way better than the other courses. If necessary, I can come to the school and tell students that it is a course that they must take. (G2)

I learnt how to write a CV in ENG 311, and it was useful. ENG 311 is a course that should be further improved and should be in the program. It teaches business English. (G15)

G3, G6, and G21 shared similar views. G32 and G33 stated that ENG 311 is an important course; however, they thought that course could be implemented more effectively.

ESP

Fourteen graduates said that field-specific English was not a problem and there was no need for ESP. They provided various reasons for their stance. G12, G28, G31 and G32 indicated that they learnt English in the departments.

There are 100-200 terms used in Mining Engineering, and these are taught during the four year education at the departments. (G31)

There was also the concern that focusing on field-specific English would result in less time for other major problematic areas. G32, G17, G31 and G37 commented on their concerns about an ESP approach. G32 believed that their English deteriorated since they focused only on technical English in their departments. He added that “Technical English means nothing on its own”. G17 also stated that the fact that there were no English courses after the sophomore year, and that students continued only with the English in their departments were disadvantageous for the development of English. Instead of more departmental English, in English courses, there had to be more practice on skills like English used in daily interaction and writing (G31, G37 & G40). G39 was in favour of a division like formal and social English rather than ESP.

G5 highlighted another limitation of an ESP approach. S/he stated that students did not necessarily work in their field of study, and therefore, learning non-departmental English would be more relevant and useful for students. G5 suggested students to take as many non-departmental courses as possible to increase their qualifications to work in different sectors. G9 thought that ESP was neither needed nor feasible since it was impossible to cover all the terms students will need at the workplace during their undergraduate education. G16 had a similar stance, and s/he further elaborated on the possible limitations of an ESP approach:

I do not think ESP would be useful. We learn different jargon and terminology in each course, and it would be impossible to cover all in one course... It may be possible to provide some basics, but it is difficult for English teachers to master topics and jargon of different fields.

G16 also pointed out how the rapid developments of technology would be problematic:

Another obstacle is the introduction of new terms every passing day. It would be very difficult to catch up with these in the courses... The courses would be outdated.

Ten graduates indicated that the main problem for them at the workplace was in deed not knowing Turkish terminology.

Four participants (G1, G4, G6 and G39) stated that some students were challenged in their departmental studies due to their limited English, especially in their freshman year. However, G6 and G39 were unsure if the problem stemmed mainly from lacking field-specific terminology or not. In G6's words, they blamed (not comprehending) English for anything they found difficult. G24 and G38 stated that it may be useful to differentiate English for engineering and English for social sciences. G6 stated that there could be ESP courses since there were many students frustrated by terminology; however, s/he said that these courses should be offered by the departments. G15, on the other hand, suggested that the English Department could cooperate with the other departments and train them on how to teach jargon and terminology.

Some graduates dwelled on the terminology they needed at the workplace. For example, G10 stated that they studied contracts, and needed to be familiar with law terminology. G23 believed that learning some common trade terms like *tender*, *shipment*, or *terms of payment* would be useful in preparing students for the workplace.

There were also suggestions on how to improve the current English program without switching to an ESP approach. G26 stated that the School of Foreign Languages could contact the faculty teachers and get their suggestions about articles. These articles then could

be used for essay writing. G26 indicated that allowing students to write their essays about their own fields would be more beneficial.

English in the Departments

Although how much English participants used in their department varied to a great extent even on the basis of the individual professor's teaching philosophy, the general impression was that the intensity of exposure decreased after the foundation year especially in the STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) departments (G2, G16, G17, G18, G19, G20, G22, G23, G25 and G26). For example, G26 indicated that s/he lost his/her language know-how when he started the department.

The need decreases, and you cannot go beyond understanding the terms. This is not something [ENG] 101 and 102 can solve. I could not restore the level I was at when I graduated from the Prep”.

While some participants stated that Turkish was used in the lessons (G6, G12, G15, G20, G25, G26, and G31), others said that all the courses were in English (G9 and G16). Turkish was used even when there were international students in class, but then to a lesser extent. How much Turkish was tolerated followed a rather uneven pattern. For example, one of them (G39) said that the professors did not want students to ask Turkish questions, another stated that his/her sister also studied at METU, and in the exams, they were allowed to answer the questions in Turkish (G6). This diverse attitude emerged even in cases where the graduates took the same course from two different instructors. The following excerpt is from a group interview with two graduates from the Department of Architecture:

When we were at the university, during the jury presentations, we would start in English and switch to Turkish when we were stuck. We did not have to present in English. In an English-medium university, such things should be in English. It would be great if there were a foreign professor in each jury. (G15)

In response to G15, G16 stated that all the juries she presented at were conducted in English.

Graduates stated that in the departments, students got more competent at field-specific English; however, their general English deteriorated (G2, G16, and G17).

When I started the department, I felt that I got detached from daily English and my English got rusty. (G16)

The graduates particularly focused on speaking skills:

Especially in departments when students deal with numbers, speaking is more problematic. Students in the social sciences may be speaking more. (G2)

[In the departmental course] you ask questions only when there is something you do not understand, and that's only if you like. (G20)

We do not have many opportunities to speak in the departments. Therefore, speaking in English lessons is particularly important. (G22)

You feel confident when you exit Prep. You think you are well-equipped in speaking. Then the graphic falls. There is less loss in understanding and writing. There is more loss in speaking. G23

Learning at the Workplace

As graduates reported there are different kinds and levels of support provided to employees to cope with the business tasks they are required to carry out. For example, in some companies they are allowed to spend some time to adjust and observe their fellows before they are engaged in more challenging tasks (G17 and G32):

I do not expect the university to teach the specific language I'll use at work. Our supervisors provide feedback on our writing. That's how I learnt [business] writing. (G33)

One of the institutions provides an online phrasebook which defines terminology used at the workplace. Some institutions provide training. The graduates think that they gradually improve their job-related language skills at work.

Culture

In response to question 7, which investigated if the graduates experienced problems arising from cultural differences and if culture should be taught in English courses, fourteen participants said that culture did not create problems in business. However, it is important to note that the graduates did not consider social/ daily English as part of cultural knowledge. For example, G32 stated that cultural differences did not create problems when working with an international team because people who work in such contexts were usually tolerant:

Even in cases which can be perceived as offensive, people are tolerant because they know that this may be due to cultural differences.

G31, who worked with business people from different European countries, said that teaching culture as part of English courses was neither necessary nor feasible:

Everybody is from a different nation. Whose culture are you going to teach? In addition, they don't know your culture. Why will you learn theirs? I think culture in the business circles is no longer that different. Maybe it would be different when

working with the Middle East, but when Turkish and European business people at a certain level are considered, I don't think culture is a problem.

G16, on the other hand, indicated that cultural differences could be problematic, but s/he does not think that it is possible to teach culture:

Sometimes cultural differences are immense, but I don't think something about this can be taught. For which culture will you prepare the students anyway? Each culture has different English skills and levels. Communication (across cultures) sometimes is a problem even in Turkey. Culture varies from region to region even in Turkey.

G26 stated that cultural differences were a concern:

We have problems with things like how to greet people, what is polite and what is rude. It is important to be knowledgeable about cultural differences. We learn such things from people who have been abroad before.

Suggestions

The graduates made a number of suggestions to improve the English education at METU. They are presented under three headings: speaking, elective courses, and raising student awareness.

Speaking

The majority of the suggestions to improve the English education provided at university focus on speaking. In total, there were 28 comments related to speaking, and they all stressed the need to create further opportunities to help students practice speaking. G2's comments are representative of the overall group:

All of the ODTU graduates can't go abroad [to learn speaking]. Action should be taken when students are at the university. My friends also have the same opinion. There is no problem in comprehension, but speaking is problematic. In speaking it's important to break the chains.

Four participants (G6, G8, G21 and G23) stated that students had to be encouraged or even forced to speak in the lessons. Creating opportunities not only in classes but also outside the class were also suggested. Four graduates (G3, G23, G33 and G39) pointed out that the presence of international students on the campus was a great opportunity. G33 and G36 recommended bringing Turkish students and international students together.

The university has to do something about speaking. Even simply making arrangements for people to meet can be sufficient. (G33)

Students should become closer with the international students in order that they need to constantly use English every day. (G36)

Elective Courses

Twelve comments related to introducing elective courses were made. As discussed earlier, there were some concerns about the gradual deterioration of non-technical English skills, and it was suggested that this problem could be tackled by offering elective courses. As G17 said “it’s important to be constantly practising”. G6, G17, G18, G27, G31, G37 and G40 were in favour of elective courses on speaking and communication. G40 underlined the importance of topic selection and assessment policies to motivate students to enrol in such courses:

There should be courses to improve social English and fluency students can take without grade concerns. In these courses, current issues can be discussed. Topics like the lives of polar bears should be avoided.

Other suggestions for elective courses were Business English (G27), Advanced Academic Writing (G27), and Literature (G17).

Raising Student Awareness

Another frequent theme was the importance of raising students’ awareness of the importance of English for their success. All the participant graduates in the study believed that English was important; however, they generally acknowledged the fact that, when they were students, they did not have the time and/or motivation to invest in improving their English. G23 dwelled on the role of English for a successful career in engineering. S/he shared the views of the Indian CEO of a world giant firm on why Turkish engineers were falling behind in the global business world. According to the CEO, the reason was Turkish engineers’ limited English:

Turkish engineers are by no means less competent than Indian engineers; however, Indian engineers are in the top positions. This is because Indian engineers can express themselves better [in English].

G23 wished s/he could share his/ her experience with ODTU students:

We’re doing a million dollar business with many companies. It seems as if I can do anything as long as I can communicate in English. Fortunately, our English is better than some others’. I don’t know how we can tell this to ODTU students. I volunteer to come to the classes and tell this to them.

G40, another engineer, made a complementary remark. “Even if you are as bright as Einstein, if you don’t know English you can’t do anything”. S/he believed that the orientation program during the foundation year was unsatisfactory, and also volunteered to come to the school and talk to students to increase their awareness:

In order to raise students' awareness, you can contact ODTU graduates who are willing to help... This can be done at the beginning of the semester... Graduates and students can be brought together in a talk.

Both G40 and G7 thought that the current orientation program in which the students visited the departments was ineffective.

I do not think it [orientation] is meaningful. [Prep] students consider it an assignment. Grade 4 students are very busy, and think that it is drudgery. The professors have their own problems and work... [Also, for students] it is difficult to talk with the professors. It may be a good idea to meet the students and graduates.

G40 added that these talks should be in Turkish, and while speaking, the speaker had to refrain from using imperatives. S/he had to say "it may be better if you did this..." rather than saying "you must/ should do this."

G7 who was also dissatisfied with the orientation program thought it could be further improved.

The professors consider it as a burden or use it to intimidate students. There are problems when they send the assistants because some assistants are incompetent. Especially, my friends in the engineering departments had a lot of problems... The assistants' English was very weak. I think the program may be refined. For example, students in the International Relations Department can be told to pay attention to (improving their) writing (skills).

Similar to G40, G16 suggested inviting graduates to share their experience. S/he referred to the course "Professional Practice" they took in their senior year at the Department of Architecture as a highly beneficial course:

The course focused on topics like what we may encounter in the business world... Different architects came to the lesson and shared their knowledge and experiences about the business world. Courses like this may be very useful.

Another suggestion, mentorship, came from G9. S/he experienced this practice while s/he was abroad, and believed that it could be implemented in the Prep School and his/her department (Political Science and Public Administration). In this system, orientation was a process in which less senior students spent social time with more senior students.

Employer Interview

Importance of English

The importance of English was one of the topics almost all of the participant employers mentioned and agreed on although they were from different institutions and had different professional environments. One of the employers said "English is our life" to show

the role of English in professional life and added that METU is a prestigious university for having an English medium instruction and it should be different from the other universities (Institution 3). This was also mentioned by E8, who owns his/her own firm, saying that English is so important that English medium instruction is the reason why METU stands out among the other universities. E2, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of English in order to be hired in a global company saying that even the local firms are trying to find their customers in the international arena, and thus they are in need of English speaking employees. S/he exemplified the importance of speaking English saying that the firms do not send the best engineers but they send their best English speaking employee to the international fairs. S/he also gave an example from a very well-known global cooperation indicating that they outsource engineers from India instead of Turkey, not because the engineering knowledge and skills of the Turkish engineers are weaker but because Indian engineers are better in oral communication and expressing themselves in English. The employer in Institution 5 added that English is the “sine qua non” of today’s professional life, which was also mentioned by the interviewee in Institution 3, who said that it is impossible to have a career as an administrator without having English language skills. Despite the agreement on the importance of English, only Institution 1, whose three administrative managers took part in the study, showed a clear and organized attempt to improve their employees’ area specific vocabulary by creating a 4000- word online intranet dictionary, sharing training videos through their own company network and arranging monthly panel discussions with well-known experts.

Tasks Needed

Another theme was the tasks needed for the METU graduates to accomplish in their professional life. The responses were grouped according to the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It was seen that listening and speaking skills are intertwined in work life. The employers from large firms and/or with intense international links indicated the importance of attending meetings in English, talking on the phone or video conferencing with non-Turkish speakers overseas (depending on the position their employees hold or the department they work at), and attending fairs, seminars and conferences abroad, all of which require the employee to fully comprehend the information presented and/or exchanged, and also to contribute using his/her English skills. Thus, the employees are expected to be highly competent and confident in expressing themselves, taking part in multi-party interactions, delivering presentations and continuing social exchanges.

Reading and writing skills are also found to be very much connected to each other. The employees are expected to read and write memos, emails, reports, project proposals and plans; comprehend articles, manuals and account plans; and compose technical and official documents for foreign customers, all of which require the employees to use a variety of specific expressions, correct grammar and a formal style and register.

METU Graduates' Level of English

After the interviewed employers mentioned the list of tasks needed for their business context, they were also asked to discuss the English language level of the METU graduates that have been working in their institution as employees. Two of the employers indicated that METU graduates had no problem in reading and writing in English (E4 and E5), one of them said s/he did not think METU graduates came across with any language problems or limitation (E3), and one of them said being a METU graduate had an advantage over the Turkish-medium universities in Turkey in the global arena with their language and professional knowledge and education (E9).

However, some problems experienced over the years were also mentioned, and the productive skills, Speaking and Writing, were emphasized in the responses. Two of the employers pointed out the problems in formal writing in business life and use of a variety of vocabulary. One of them said they needed to search on the internet to write in certain formats using the appropriate style and register before they wrote any document in English (E8). Although writing was mentioned by two, speaking was the most frequent subtheme and appeared in the entire employer interviews to a small or large extent. Employers from Institution 1 indicated that speaking was the only problem they experience with METU graduates, while the other employers mentioned specific subskills, including problems of accuracy, fluency and using communicative strategies. While E2 emphasized the grammar mistakes in speech, E5 stated that fluency in spoken English was the main problem at the initial stages for the recent graduates but then they improved themselves quickly. E2 and E04 referred to different varieties of English and the difficulty of understanding different accents and indicated that some nationalities were easy to understand while others were problematic. Communication strategies in order to deal with misunderstanding, to confirm the message and to fill in the missing gaps were considered to be important skills (E2). Two of the employers also mentioned the importance of practice in speaking. Employer 7 thought speaking was the least frequently used skill and difficult to practice, which made it difficult for the graduates to improve themselves. E2 stated that it was easier to correct mistakes in

writing, but speaking had more gaps to fill in. Participants from Institution 1 stated that the graduates believed that every sentence had to be flawless and well-pronounced, which built barriers for them to use a foreign language in communication. Similarly, E7 believed the graduates are a bit reluctant to participate in daily and job related conversations since they had very little chance to have a classroom environment where they could interact in English. In addition, the employer from Institution 11 stated that no matter how successful the university education was or how smart the undergraduates were, it all depended on the English language education at METU to survive in a competitive global firm, and s/he gave an example to show the importance of comprehending other parties and expressing oneself in formal meetings saying that “everything may go well until a Brit changes the meeting topic and you lose track of it”.

Only two of the employers specifically referred to new graduates in order to talk about a problem in writing and oral communication skills. Employer 2 pointed out that problems in emails such as the style, register use and organization might sometimes cause problems. Employer 3, on the other hand, stated novice employees had problems in oral presentations and short conversations, but they improved themselves over time as they had more experience in the work field. Employer 14 made a quick short comment saying that “English language education should be better”.

Culture

Culture was also one of the language aspects examined in the interviews with the hypothesis that cultural aspects were important to be aware of and to adapt to for employees depending on the multicultural and multilingual work place environment. However, half of the participants did not refer to culture as an important aspect or a required skill for the employees, and three of them said cultural differences did not cause problems in communication. One of the firm-owner employers indicated that cultural differences can be observed even locally and teaching these is neither feasible nor necessary (E8). E11 stated that different cultures had different customs and practices; the thing one needed to do was to leave their native culture aside and keep in mind the rules of the global culture. In contrast to the other participants, s/he thought those aspects should be covered in undergraduate education.

Expectations and Suggestions

During the interviews, the employers made comments on the education provided by the SFL. When expressing views, the majority of the participant employers also drew on their own experience as language learners and METU graduates. E4 suggested providing an opportunity to undergraduate students to take a class on speaking skills every term to improve their oral communication skills. E3 believed the engineering students had to take a class on presentation skills or business English, which could even be offered in the summer school. S/he also thought that the undergraduate students might not be aware of the importance of English during their education; thus, METU or the SFL had to try to inform students of what was expected from them in their professional life. E8 referred to the ENG 311 course and suggested adding a formal writing component to the course content.

Discussion of the Significant Findings

In this part of the report, the findings of the graduate and employer interviews are summarized and discussed. When relevant, certain action plans are suggested.

The study revealed the most common language tasks that employees are expected to perform at the workplace. These tasks can be compared with the tasks in the English program. If necessary, the tasks in the present SFL curriculum can be updated to better prepare students for the business world. For example, emails constitute an important portion of the writing and reading employees do at work. The curriculum team should investigate “to what extent does the English program teach the conventions of formal and informal email writing?”, and discuss if there is a need for an upgrade. In addition, the listening materials should be reconsidered in light of the feedback provided by the participants. It seems using authentic listening materials that better reflect the ELF context may be more useful for students in the long run. The findings also point out the need to focus more on the use of formal language in a wider range of contexts. Finally, the English program can put more emphasis on expanding vocabulary.

As the findings indicate speaking is the weakest point in the program. This is consistent with the findings of the OGEB research conducted in 2012 with the participation of 1272 METU graduates (Güneri, Sümer, Aydın-Çapa, Çağ, & Barutçu, 2012). According to the report, less than 50% of the METU graduates think that they are sufficient in public speaking, sociability and English speaking skills. The same report states that 79.3% of the participants suggested increasing the number of English speaking and writing courses. The findings of the present study have revealed that graduates are concerned about their

limitations in speaking fluently and spontaneously. They expect speaking skills to cover not only presentation skills but also spontaneous speaking. They want to become competent in using English in social contexts. Weak speaking skills seem to be associated not only with impeding business negotiations but also with loss of face and prestige. It is believed that immediate action should be taken to help METU students improve their speaking skills. At this point, suggestions from the graduates and those from other stakeholders can be evaluated by a curriculum team, and further plans can be made and put into action to remedy the problem. For instance, as the graduates suggested, opportunities outside class should be created. There were several references to practising speaking with international students. How to encourage students to practice spoken English with international students is one of the questions that should be looked into.

The findings show that students who start the program weak are not very likely to catch up with students who have a strong background. This is true especially in terms of speaking. However, since education should aspire to deal with inequities in society, it is believed that when making administrative and curricular decisions bridging the gap between English-high background and English-low background students should be a priority. One possible outcome of such an orientation would be to move towards learning-oriented assessment practices.

As graduates suggested, a wider range of elective courses can be offered to students who want to further improve their language skills. However, it should be noted that these courses are not likely to be preferred especially by weaker students unless the “business as usual approach” to course design is put aside. As indicated above, a learning-oriented assessment frame may be more suitable for such elective courses. This applies to ENG 311 Advanced Communication Course (English for Business) as well. In addition, it may be a good idea to reconsider the allocated time to teach the two dimensions of the course identified in the course syllabus: applying for a job & at the workplace.

Although the majority of the participants were not in favour of ESP, as suggested by them, some action can be taken to help especially students in their freshman year. Teaching basic mathematical terms in the Prep School and integrating texts from various disciplines are two possible practices that emerged in the data. What is more, promoting the idea of transferable skills can help students to look at ENG 101 and ENG 102 courses with a new glass. However, the two courses should still be evaluated in light of the feedback provided by the participants.

The participants believe that students may be more eager and motivated to improve their English if they are more knowledgeable about its importance. They suggested improving the present practices and introducing new ones to raising students' awareness of the role of English in departments and business. Refining the currently used orientation program, introducing a fellowship system and inviting graduates for talks were among the suggestions. It was pointed out that these practices should be offered at the beginning of the semester. In addition, the idea of a video project in which graduates will share their experience as language users in the business world emerged and received support from the participants.

Finally, it should be noted that METU students have a very busy schedule, and it may not be possible for them to take any extra English courses. For these reasons, the unity and coherence of the SFL curriculum is very important. The DBE and MLD curricula need to complement each other to help students achieve the goals and succeed not only in their departments but also in the work place. In order to make the most of the limited time, while encouraging recycling, redundancy should be avoided in curriculum design.

The suggestions provided by the participants (graduates and employers) in this phase of the curriculum evaluation and the ones listed by the researchers can only be put into effect with the collaboration and cooperation of the different academic and administrative departments at METU. Figure 3 below shows the role distribution among different departments of the university. Problems, actions and parties to be involved in action are outlined in Table 3 below.

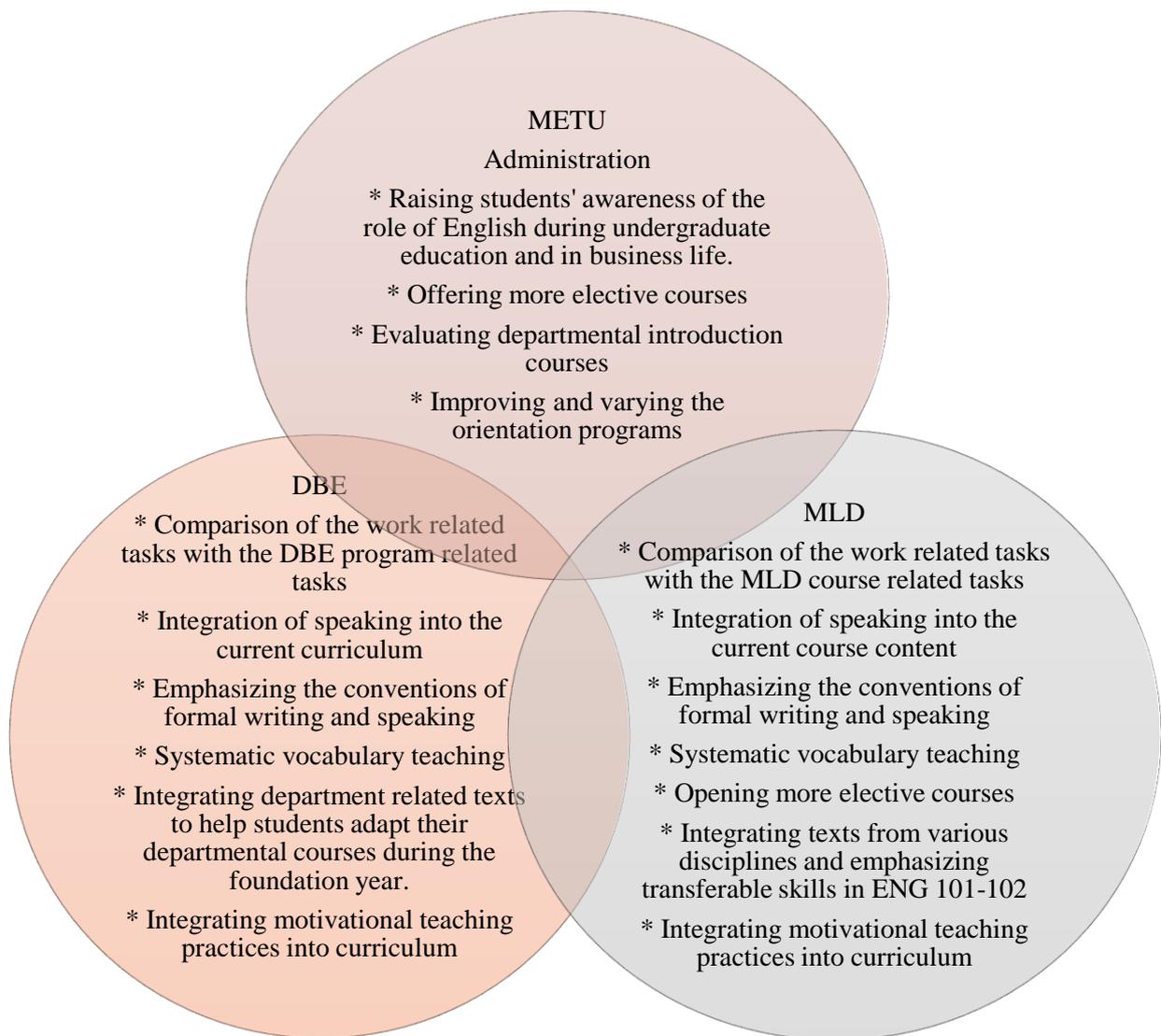


Figure 3: The Role Distribution

Table 3 Problems, Actions and Parties to be involved in Action

Problems	Action	Party to be involved
Authenticity and the scope of the tasks in the current curriculum	Reviewing the curriculum	DBE & MLD Committees
Authenticity of the listening tasks	- Using more authentic listening tasks that reflect the real-life - Including a range of accents in the listening materials	DBE & MLD Committees
Formal language use	- Emphasizing the conventions of formal writing and speaking	DBE & MLD Committees
Limited vocabulary (size or range)	- Systematic vocabulary teaching	DBE & MLD Committees
Poor speaking skills (Fluency, Spontaneous speech, social and everyday English)	- Reviewing the curriculum - Systematic speaking teaching - Offering elective courses - Creating opportunities to practice speaking with international students	METU Board SFL DBE & MLD Committees
Department Related Language and Skills	- Brief introduction in preparatory school - Adjustments in ENG 101-102 - Evaluating departmental introduction courses	METU Board SFL DBE & MLD Committees
Student awareness and motivation	- Improving and varying the orientation programs - Integrating motivational teaching practices into curriculum	METU Board SFL DBE & MLD Committees

Concluding Remarks

The present study does not aim to make generalizations about students, departments and faculties, and the researchers are not in a position to judge the present practices and policies. It aims to gain insight into what the present situation is and graduates' perceptions about it. The suggestions in the discussion part are tentative and open to revision under the comments and suggestions from the stakeholders for whom the report is intended. The findings need to be discussed with relevant parties, and further research areas should be determined so that action can be taken to further improve the academic skills and overall English proficiency of METU students.

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Appendix A: Questions for the Formal Interview with the Graduates

Sektör için Görüşme Soruları – Çalışanlar için

Sayın Mezun, bu görüşme şu anda üzerinde çalışmakta olduğumuz ODTÜ Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu Program Yenileme ve Geliştirme Projesi'ne veri toplamak amacıyla uygulanmaktadır. Çalışmanın sonuçları sadece bu amaçla kullanılacak ve cevaplarınız gizli tutulacaktır. Katkılarınızdan dolayı teşekkür ederim.

Bölüm A: Demografik Bilgiler

Mezunun adı soyadı:

1. Mezun olduğunuz bölüm ve yılı nedir?
2. Mezun olduğunuz lise hangisidir?
3. ODTÜ'de hazırlık okudunuz mu?
4. Kaç yıldır iş hayatındasınız?
5. Bu kurumdaki göreviniz nedir?

Bölüm B:

1. Çalışma hayatınızda en çok ihtiyaç duyduğunuz İngilizce dil becerisi hangisidir? (okuma, yazma, konuşma, dinleme).
2. Çalışma hayatınızda İngilizce **okuma** becerilerini hangi işleri/ aktiviteleri yapmak için kullanıyorsunuz? Bu konuda kendinizi ne ölçüde yeterli buluyorsunuz? (kaynak taraması, internet metinleri, e-mail, faks metni, iş yazışmaları, broşür, katalog, araştırmalar...)
 - İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken güçlü yönleriniz nelerdir?
 - İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken nelerde zorlanıyorsunuz?
3. Çalışma hayatınızda **yazma** becerilerini hangi işleri/ aktiviteleri yapmak için kullanıyorsunuz? Bu konuda kendinizi ne ölçüde yeterli buluyorsunuz? (ihale dosyası hazırlama, e-mail, faks metni, katalog, broşür, web-sayfası, araştırma, rapor, iş yazışmaları, çeviri...)
 - İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken güçlü yönleriniz nelerdir?
 - İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken nelerde zorlanıyorsunuz?
4. Çalışma hayatınızda **dinleme** becerilerini hangi işleri/ aktiviteleri yapmak için kullanıyorsunuz? Bu konuda kendinizi ne ölçüde yeterli buluyorsunuz? (seminer, konferans/görüntülü - görüntüsüz telekonferans, telefon görüşmesi vb. katılımı, hizmet içi veya öncesi eğitim, toplantı, telefon konuşması, sosyal iletişim, sunu yapma, satış ve iş görüşmelerine yönelik görüşmeler, toplantıya katılma; seminer ...)
 - İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken güçlü yönleriniz nelerdir?
 - İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken nelerde zorlanıyorsunuz?

5. Çalışma hayatınızda **konuşma** becerilerini hangi işleri/ aktiviteleri yapmak için kullanıyorsunuz? Bu konuda kendinizi ne ölçüde yeterli buluyorsunuz? (telefon konuşması, sosyal iletişim, sunu yapma, satış ve iş görüşmelerine yönelik görüşmeler, toplantıya katılma; seminer, konferans/görüntülü - görüntüsüz telekonferans, telefon görüşmesi vb.)
- İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken güçlü yönleriniz nelerdir?
 - İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken nelerde zorlanıyorsunuz?
6. Kurumunuz çalışanlarının İngilizcesini geliştirmek için ne gibi girişimlerde bulunuyor?
- Bu faaliyetlerden hangilerine katılıyorsunuz/ katılmanız gerekiyor?
 - Bunların dışında İngilizcenizi geliştirmek adına bireysel girişiminiz oluyorsa nelerdir?
7. Anadili İngilizce olan/ olmayan yabancılarla ne oranda ve hangi ortamlarda iletişim kuruyorsunuz? Bu iletişimler çoğunlukla anadili İngilizce olan yabancılar mı? Bu iletişimlerin başarılı olabilmesi için dil becerileri dışında ne gibi becerilere sahip olmanız gerekiyor?
- i. Kültürel farkları tolere etme
 - ii. Farklı kültürden paydaşlarla takım çalışması
8. ODTÜ mezunu iş arkadaşlarınızla ODTÜ'deki İngilizce öğretimi hakkında ya da su andaki İngilizce yeterlilikleriniz hakkında sohbet etme fırsatınız oluyor mu? Onlardan ne gibi görüşler, bilgiler alıyorsunuz?
9. ODTÜ mezunu iş arkadaşlarınızın kendi İngilizce bilgilerini değerlendirip, eksik ve/veya yanlış buldukları yönlerini geliştirmeye çalıştıklarını gözlemliyor musunuz?
10. Eğer ODTÜ İngilizce öğretmenleri ile bir toplantıya katılsanız onlara ne söylemek isterdiniz?

Appendix B: Questions for the Formal Interview with the Employers

Sektör için Görüşme Soruları – İşverenler için

Sayın işveren, bu görüşme şu anda üzerinde çalışmakta olduğumuz ODTÜ Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu Program Yenileme ve Geliştirme Projesi'ne veri toplamak amacıyla uygulanmaktadır. Çalışmanın sonuçları sadece bu amaçla kullanılacak ve cevaplarınız gizli tutulacaktır. Katkılarınızdan dolayı teşekkür ederim.

Bölüm A: Demografik Bilgiler

Kurumun Adı/ Birimi:

Görüşülen kişinin ismi ve pozisyonu:

1. Bünyenizde kaç eleman çalıştırıyorsunuz? Bunların arasında ODTÜ mezunlarının oranı nedir?
2. Bünyenizde çalışan ODTÜ mezunları ne gibi alanlarda çalışıyorlar? (proje yönetimi, satın alma, halkla ilişkiler, idareci, vb.)
3. Bünyenizde çalışan yabancılar (anadili İngilizce olan/ olmayan) var mı? Varsa bunların oranı nedir?
4. İşe alma sürecinde adayların İngilizce yeterliliğinin nasıl bir etkisi var? Adayların İngilizce yeterliliğini nasıl ölçüyorsunuz?
 - a. İngilizce yeterliliğini ölçmek için kullandığınız sınavlar paylaşımına açıksa fikir edinmek için görmemiz mümkün mü?
 - b. Adayları işe alırken ODTÜ mezunu olmaları bir tercih sebebi midir? Neden?

Bölüm B:

1. Çalışma hayatında en çok ihtiyaç duyulan İngilizce dil becerisi hangisidir? (okuma, yazma, konuşma, dinleme).
2. Kurumunuzda çalışan ODTÜ mezunları İngilizce **okuma** becerilerini hangi işleri/aktiviteleri yapmak için kullanıyor? (kaynak taraması, internet metinleri, e-mail, faks metni, iş yazışmaları, broşür, katalog, araştırmalar...)
 - a. ODTÜ mezunlarının İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken güçlü yönleri nelerdir?
 - b. ODTÜ mezunları İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken nelerde zorlanıyor?
3. Kurumunuzda çalışan ODTÜ mezunları İngilizce **yazma** becerilerini hangi işleri/aktiviteleri yapmak için kullanıyor? (ihale dosyası hazırlama, e-mail, faks metni, katalog, broşür, web-sayfası, araştırma, rapor, iş yazışmaları, çeviri...)
 - a. ODTÜ mezunlarının İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken güçlü yönleri neler?

- b. ODTÜ mezunları İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken nelerde zorlanıyor?
4. Kurumunuzda çalışan ODTÜ mezunları İngilizce **dinleme** becerilerini hangi işleri/aktiviteleri yapmak için kullanıyor? (seminer, konferans/görüntülü - görüntüsüz telekonferans, telefon görüşmesi vb. katılımı, hizmet içi veya öncesi eğitim, toplantı, telefon konuşması, sosyal iletişim, sunu yapma, satış ve is görüşmelerine yönelik görüşmeler, toplantıya katılma; seminer ...)
- a. ODTÜ mezunlarının İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken güçlü yönleri nelerdir?
- b. ODTÜ mezunları İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken nelerde zorlanıyor?
5. Kurumunuzda çalışan ODTÜ mezunları İngilizce **konuşma** becerilerini hangi işleri/aktiviteleri yapmak için kullanıyor? (telefon konuşması, sosyal iletişim, sunu yapma, satış ve is görüşmelerine yönelik görüşmeler, toplantıya katılma; seminer, konferans/görüntülü - görüntüsüz telekonferans, telefon görüşmesi vb.)
- a. ODTÜ mezunlarının İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken güçlü yönleri nelerdir?
- b. ODTÜ mezunları İngilizcede bu dil becerisini kullanırken nelerde zorlanıyor?
6. Kurum olarak çalışanlarınızın İngilizcelelerini geliştirmeleri için ne gibi girişimlerde bulunuyorsunuz?
- a. ODTU mezunları bu faaliyetlerden hangilerine katılıyor/ katılmaları gerekiyor?
7. Çalışanlarınız anadili İngilizce olan ve olmayan yabancılarla iletişimde dil becerileri dışında ne gibi becerilere ihtiyaç duyuyorlar?
- a. Kültürel farkları tolere etme
- b. Farklı kültürden paydaşlarla takım çalışması
8. Çalışanlarınızla ODTÜ'deki İngilizce öğretimi hakkında ya da şu andaki İngilizce yeterlilikleri hakkında sohbet etme fırsatınız oluyorsa, onlardan ne gibi görüşler, bilgiler alıyorsunuz?
9. ODTÜ mezunu çalışanlarınızın kendi İngilizce bilgilerini değerlendirip, eksik ve/veya yanlış buldukları yönlerini geliştirmeye çalıştıklarını gözlemliyor musunuz?
10. Eğer ODTÜ İngilizce öğretmenleri ile bir toplantıya katılırsanız onlara ne söylemek isterdiniz?