

## The Role of Needs Analysis in Language Program Renewal Process

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<b>Article history</b>	Periodically evaluating and revising existing language programs is of great value for stakeholders in a language school as the ongoing program evaluation paves the way for developing curricula effectively. The present research study aims to investigate the context and program of an English preparatory school in Istanbul and to suggest new ways and rationale for making curricular decisions. The study used a needs assessment survey and interviews with a number of EFL learners at school. The results showed that the program proved sufficient for learners' language skills. Furthermore, language levels (e.g A1, A2, B1, B2) were found to have an important impact on the extent to which learners perceive their competence in skills. Learners responded positively in the questionnaire about materials, methods, and assessment but they criticized the inefficacy of teachers in the interviews. This study revealed that needs analysis plays an important role in making curricular decisions or renewing language programs. To this end, several suggestions to language teaching schools and curriculum designers are offered.
<b>Received:</b> 04 February 2012	
<b>Received in revised form:</b> 26 April 2012	
<b>Accepted:</b> 30 April 2012	
<b>Key words:</b>	
Needs assessment, curriculum development, language program evaluation	

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### 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the amount of research looking into students' needs, beliefs, and attitudes towards learning English has substantially increased. The reasons for this growing body of research on learner needs can be attested to the fact that needs assessment lays the foundations of curricular decisions. Specifically speaking, as students see English per se as a prerequisite for the progress up to the ladder of a high quality education, thus causing non-native speakers of English to outnumber native speakers three to one all over the world (Crystal, 1997) and as they have varying proficiency levels and language backgrounds, with varying needs, attitudes, and beliefs, then, of course, research aiming to meet these changing needs of EFL students should also increase.

In addition, what makes needs assessment so ubiquitous is that it helps curriculum developers to compartmentalize learners' needs to the rank of importance (Elisha-Primo, Sandler, Goldfrad, Ferenz, & Perpignan, 2010). For instance, thanks to a needs assessment survey, Basturkmen (1998) explored students' needs and attitudes in Kuwait University and argued that needs analysis is a useful tool to collect data about students' expectations. Furthermore, Richards (2001) suggests that designating needs, setting goals and objectives, incorporating them into curriculum, implementing and evaluating are sine qua non for curriculum renewal process in language teaching schools.

However, it is germane to bear in mind that needs are not static; but rather, changeable. Therefore, to bridge the gap that is likely to happen between school curriculum and students' needs, curriculum designers must evaluate curriculum occasionally to decide whether it still meets the needs of students at school. Jackson (2005: 294) clearly supported 'the benefits of periodically evaluating and revising existing ESP programs'. Brown (1989: 235) argued that 'the ongoing

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program evaluation is the glue that connects and holds all of the elements together.’ Brown also suggests if elements forming the curriculum are isolated, any of them may become pointless.

Seen in this light, the fundamental precept of renewing the curriculum is to unite needs assessment and curriculum development process. Doing needs assessment on health students at university, Lepetit and Cichocki (2002) claim needs analysis is of central importance for developing curriculum. Grier (2005) suggests that curriculum developers must have tenable information which will provide them a basis to ensconce their curricular decisions. If needs assessments are united with curriculum goals and objectives, students will not be in ‘an either-or situation but rather can select options that benefit both the learners and society’ (Grier, 2005: 60). Belcher states that needs assessment should be the bedrock on which all decisions are based and lists the roles of ESP professionals as ‘needs assessors first and foremost, then designers and implementers of specialized curricula in response to identified needs’ (2006: 135).

Looking into students’ voices should make us gain some important insights underpinning effective or ineffective language programs in preparatory schools. Hutchinson and Waters succinctly summarize that ‘tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need’ (1987: 8). To wit, English varies in accordance with students’ needs. Hence, needs assessment is essential for the practice of specific-purpose teaching (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987); in other words, it guides teachers to delineate what specific language students need to succeed in their courses (Johns, 1991). Furthermore, it helps teachers to evaluate and ameliorate students’ existing problems and weakness and to empower their strengths and competencies (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

### ***1.1. Prior studies in Turkey***

Although much has already been learned about Turkish students’ attitudes, beliefs and needs in Turkey (Erdem, 1999; Gerede, 2005; Erdoğan, 2005; Tunç, 2010; Kırkgöz, 2009; Akyel & Ozek, 2010), so much more still lies undiscovered. Evaluating the effectiveness of English language curriculum of METU Foundation High School and collecting data through questionnaires, interviews and observations, Erdem (1999) found out that the existing curriculum was not student centered but teacher centered and that teachers needed in-service teacher training.

Erdoğan (2005) investigated the perceptions of both teachers and students at 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade in primary state schools. Data were collected through questionnaires given to both teachers and students and through semi-structured interviews only with students. Analysis showed that both teachers and students needed some changes to be carried out by considering their views.

With respect to the prep school program evaluation studies, firstly, Gerede (2005) evaluated two different programs in prep school and compared two groups of students: first year graduates of a prep school’s old program in 2002-2003 academic years and first year graduates of the renewed program in 2003-2004 academic years. Data came from questionnaires at two different times. The main analysis indicated that the renewed program was significantly better in meeting students’ needs. However, since the departments were constrained only to five academic departments at both times, the results of the study may not be generalized to other disciplines.

Secondly, Tunç (2010) evaluated an English language teaching program at a public University using CIPP model (context, input, process and product). The English program of the prep school was based on A, B and C level. Tunç, in this study, evaluated students’ perceived skill competencies across many background variables and examined students’ opinions concerning materials, methods, assessment and teachers. Data came from questionnaire, interviews and written documents. While students thought that four skills were emphasized by the program, teachers thought that more time should be allocated to speaking and listening skills.

Besides, performing a multi-dimensional needs analysis at a University in Turkey, Kırkgöz (2009) suggested that five major innovative changes need to be ensconced to the new program. Kırkgöz set the goals and objectives which were implemented and evaluated. Kırkgöz obtained positive results, which were attributed to the new program after the needs assessment. Additionally, Akyel and Ozek (2010) investigated students' needs for the innovation of preparatory school at a University in Turkey. Questionnaire and interviews showed that speaking abilities of learners were ignored by language teaching schools and that teachers were central in language classes.

### **1.2. The present study**

The school curriculum was based on the premise of Common European Framework (CEF). It consisted of A1, A2, B1, and B2 levels. At the beginning of academic year, to place learners into the levels, students took Michigan placement test. Each level lasted for two months, thus allowing students to graduate after eight months on condition that they did not fail. If they failed, they had to attend to summer classes.

This research study initially aimed to explore whether learners were properly placed to levels (A1, A2, B1, and B2) after the Michigan Placement test. However, when the researcher negotiated the aim of the research with stakeholders, the administrators admitted that they were already aware that students were not placed in accordance with the premises of Common European Framework. Besides, coordinators did not select textbooks by considering the actual levels of CEF and some textbooks, which in fact need to be taught in B2 level, were being used in B1 level. But, when students applied to Erasmus programs, they were assumed to know English at the degree of B2 level of CEF.

Prior to the evaluation process, all these issues meant that the research was going to provide untenable information to the stakeholders about the school's language program. Therefore, administrators requested the researcher to explore learners' needs, strengths and weaknesses so that they could use data to innovate the curriculum of the following year. When administrators and coordinators wanted a needs assessment to ameliorate the existing curriculum, the main aim of the research changed. As a result, the study has tried to answer the following questions:

1. How much does the EFL preparatory school program pay attention to language skills, vocabulary and grammar teaching?
2. Do levels have any impact on EFL students' perceived success in English language skills?
3. Do academic disciplines have any impact on EFL students' perceived success in English language skills?
4. What do EFL students think about teaching materials, teaching methods and assessment system of the prep school?
5. What do EFL students feel about the curriculum in the prep school?
6. What do EFL teachers feel about the curriculum in the prep school?

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Participants**

This study was carried out at a preparatory school of an English medium University in Turkey in the second semester of 2010-2011 academic years. At the time of the research, there were 52 classes in the school including nearly 1040 EFL students, out of whom 105 participants were randomly selected. Forty nine of the students were males (46.7%); fifty six were females (53.3%). Twenty academic departments were represented, which were listed in two areas: *social sciences* (72,4%): Psychology, History, Language and Literature, Geography, Sociology, Economy,

Philosophy, Management, International Relations, Political Science and Public Administration, Law; *Natural and Applied sciences* (27,6%): Computer Engineering, Genetics and Bioengineering, Environmental Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Physics. This study included students from all levels: A1 (n=15, 14.3%), A2 (n=51, 48.6%), B1 (n=24, 22.9%), B2 (n=15, 14.3%). The number of the participants from A2 was the highest of all, because at the time of the research half of the students were in that level.

## **2.2. Instruments**

The research design embodied both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, because they are ‘complementary rather than as rival camps’ (Jick, 1984: 135). Data were collected from both questionnaire and interviews. The former was used for descriptive and inferential statistics, whereas the latter was used for the collection of more in-depth and emergent data.

The questionnaire, based on the items of the research study by Tunç (2010), was piloted both to uncover any problems and to address them before the main study was carried out. After data collection process was completed, coefficient alpha was used for the items in the questionnaire to assess the internal consistency reliability. The coefficient alpha of 0.90 suggests that the questions comprising the questionnaire are internally consistent.

Three parts formed the questionnaire: background information; students’ self-assessment in language skills; their opinions about teaching materials, methods, assessment and teachers. The background information section asked students’ age, gender, department, and level (A1, A2, B1, and B2). In the self-assessment section, students addressed how much school paid attention to skills, vocabulary and grammar teaching. The third section elicited students’ opinions about teaching materials, teaching methods and the school’s assessment system.

Once students responded the items in the questionnaire, in order to investigate situations that are not directly observable or to elicit students’ self-reported perceptions, interviews were held with randomly selected twenty students. The interviews asked students about the CEF system, exams and their teachers’ attitudes. To search for the rival explanation, interviews were performed with randomly selected twenty teachers, as well. They were asked about the curriculum, exams, students and administration of the school. Interviews for both groups were analyzed by pattern coding, because ‘coding represents an attempt to reduce a complex, messy, context-laden and quantification resistant reality to a matrix of numbers’ (Orwin, 1994: 140). Inter-coder reliability was 85%. The conflicts were solved through discussions between coders.

## **2.3. Procedure**

The researcher and one of administrators randomly selected 105 students from 52 classes in the school (two students from each class; only three students from one class) and invited students for the study. So, the evaluation started. All students voluntarily participated. Soon after the questionnaire, both randomly selected students and teachers were interviewed in tandem.

## **3. Results**

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data coming from questionnaire. Descriptive statistics yielded a simple summary or overview of the data; inferential statistics or a set of MANOVA analyses provided better understanding of whether language levels and skills significantly differ. The results derived from SPSS 15.0 program are as follows:

**RQ1:** How much does the EFL preparatory school program pay attention to language skills, vocabulary and grammar teaching?

Descriptive statistics showed that mean scores of students were close to each other (M=2,60, SD=0,61; M=2,46, SD=0,75; M=2,25, SD=0,74; M=2,49, SD=0,75; M=2,70, SD=0,57; M=2,75, SD=0,53 for writing, reading, listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary, respectively. Nearly all students were prone to 'always' (1 seldom, 2 sometimes, 3 always). The program in the school by and large emphasized four skills, grammar and vocabulary teaching. The percentages also confirmed that most students overvalued the program in the school (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Percentages of students thinking how much the program in the school gives emphasis to four skills, grammar and vocabulary

	Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Seldom (%)	Total
Writing	66,70	26,70	6,70	100
Reading	61,00	23,80	15,20	100
Listening	42,90	39,00	18,10	100
Speaking	63,80	21,00	15,20	100
Grammar	75,20	19,00	5,70	100
Vocabulary	80,00	15,20	4,80	100

**RQ2:** Do levels have any impact on EFL students' perceived success in English language skills?

A large majority of students felt quite sufficient in skills. To understand whether there is a significant difference between levels and skills, a set of MANOVA analyses were conducted. For this purpose, first, students' total perceived sufficiency scores for each skill was collected (6, Not sufficient; 12, a little Sufficient; 18, quite sufficient). The results are as follows:

A1 level students (M=13.07, SD= 3.432; M=14.40, SD=2.414; M=12.73, SD= 3.081; M=12.07, SD= 3.218) and A2 levels students (M=14.51, SD= 2.587; M=15.14, SD= 2.569; M=12.92, SD= 3.193; M=14.22, SD= 2.708) felt 'quite sufficient' for Writing, Reading, Listening and Speaking skills, respectively. Students in B1 level (M=15.33, SD= 2.180; M=15.38, SD= 2.060; M=13.46, SD= 2.167; M=15.33, SD= 2.461) and in B2 level (M=15.93, SD= 1.831; M=17, SD= 1.512; M=16.33, SD= 1.952; M=15.60, SD= 1.549) also thought 'quite sufficient' for Writing, Reading, Listening and Speaking skills, respectively. According to these results, all levels are quite sufficient in language skills.

Second, to find out whether levels have an impact on students' perceived skill competencies, Multivariate Tests were conducted (Table 2). The results showed that levels had significant effect on perceived skill competency of students [Pillai's trace=, 327, F (4,105) = 3,058, p<.05].

**Table 2:** The results of MANOVA analyses for the effect of Levels on Skills

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesisdf	Error df	Sig. (p)	
Levels	Pillai's Trace	,327	3,058	12,000	300,000	,000

In table 3, Tests of Between-Subjects Effects also indicated that levels had significant effect on writing [F (3,105) =3,814, p>.05], on reading [F (3,105) = 3,527, p>.05], on listening [F (3,105) = 6,128, p>.05], on speaking skills [F (3,105) = 6,185, p<.05].

**Table 3:** The results of MANOVA analyses for the effect of Levels on Writing, Reading, Listening, and Speaking

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p)
Levels	Writing	74,303	3	24,768	3,814	,012
	Reading	56,698	3	18,899	3,527	,018
	Listening	146,336	3	48,779	6,128	,001
	Speaking	125,754	3	41,918	6,185	,001

In order to determine which levels differed from one another, post-hoc sheffe tests were also performed. The results showed that A1 level and B2 level were significantly different in four of the four skills from each other ( $p < .05$ ). A2 and B1 level significantly differed from B2 level in listening skill ( $p < .05$ ); A1 and B1 significantly differed from each other in speaking skill ( $p < .05$ ). Although students stated the program gave much emphasis to four skills, grammar and vocabulary teaching (see table 1), post-hoc sheffe test results indicated that each of the levels was significantly different from each other on language skills.

The main analyses revealed that although all A1 level students ( $M=13.07$ ,  $SD= 3.432$ ;  $M=14.40$ ,  $SD=2.414$ ;  $M=12.73$ ,  $SD= 3.081$ ;  $M=12.07$ ,  $SD= 3.218$ ) and all students in B2 level ( $M=15.93$ ,  $SD= 1.831$ ;  $M=17$ ,  $SD= 1.512$ ;  $M=16.33$ ,  $SD= 1.952$ ;  $M=15.60$ ,  $SD= 1.549$ ) were ‘quite sufficient’ for Writing, Reading, Listening and Speaking skills, respectively, Table 4 demonstrates that A1 level students did not perceive as sufficient as B2 level students did in all skills ( $p < .05$ ).

Though there is no significant difference between A2 and B1 level students on listening skill in perceived competency level, post-hoc sheffe test results (Table 4) showed that A2 levels students ( $M=12.92$ ,  $SD= 3.193$ ) and students in B1 level ( $M=13.46$ ,  $SD= 2.167$ ) thought less sufficient than B2 level students ( $M=16.33$ ,  $SD= 1.952$ ) on listening skill ( $p < .05$ ). Although the previous tests proved that all levels felt quite competent in four skills, Table 4 shows that there was a significant difference between A1 level students ( $M=12.07$ ,  $SD= 3.218$ ) and B1 level students ( $M=15.33$ ,  $SD= 2.461$ ) on speaking skill ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 4:** Mean differences of students’ perceived competencies with regard to levels

Dependent variables	(I) Levels		(J) Levels	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Writing	A1	A2		-1,44	,749	,300
		B1		-2,27	,839	,069
		B2		-2,87(*)	,931	,028
	A2	A1		1,44	,749	,300
		B1		-,82	,631	,637
		B2		-1,42	,749	,312
	B1	A1		2,27	,839	,069
		A2		,82	,631	,637
		B2		-,60	,839	,916
	B2	A1		2,87(*)	,931	,028
		A2		1,42	,749	,312
		B1		,60	,839	,916
Reading	A1	A2		-,74	,680	,759
		B1		-,98	,762	,652
		B2		-2,60(*)	,845	,028
	A2	A1		,74	,680	,759
		B1		-,24	,573	,982

		B2	-1,86	,680	,064
	B1	A1	,98	,762	,652
		A2	,24	,573	,982
		B2	-1,63	,762	,215
	B2	A1	2,60(*)	,845	,028
		A2	1,86	,680	,064
		B1	1,63	,762	,215
Listening	A1	A2	-,19	,829	,997
		B1	-,73	,929	,894
		B2	-3,60(*)	1,030	,009
	A2	A1	,19	,829	,997
		B1	-,54	,698	,898
		B2	-3,41(*)	,829	,001
	B1	A1	,73	,929	,894
		A2	,54	,698	,898
		B2	-2,88(*)	,929	,027
	B2	A1	3,60(*)	1,030	,009
		A2	3,41(*)	,829	,001
		B1	2,88(*)	,929	,027
Speaking	A1	A2	-2,15	,765	,054
		B1	-3,27(*)	,857	,003
		B2	-3,53(*)	,951	,005
	A2	A1	2,15	,765	,054
		B1	-1,12	,644	,395
		B2	-1,38	,765	,356
	B1	A1	3,27(*)	,857	,003
		A2	1,12	,644	,395
		B2	-,27	,857	,992
	B2	A1	3,53(*)	,951	,005
		A2	1,38	,765	,356
		B1	,27	,857	,992

\* The mean difference is significant at ,05 level.

**RQ3:** Do academic disciplines have any impact on EFL students' perceived success in English language skills?

As for the effect of the disciplines on language skills, first, total perceived sufficiency scores of the students for each skill in both disciplines were collected (6, Not sufficient; 12, a little Sufficient; 18, quite sufficient). The results are as follows: students in the Social studies group (M=14.67, SD=2.754; M=15.37, SD=2.405; M=13.46, SD=3.096; M=14.36, SD=2.906) and students in the Natural and Applied sciences (M=14.76, SD=2.400; M=15.31, SD=2.422; M=13.62, SD=2.871; M=14.38, SD=2.513) were 'quite sufficient' for Writing, Reading, Listening and Speaking skills, respectively (see Table 5). According to these results, all students in both disciplines were quite sufficient in four of the four language skills.

**Table 5:** Means, Standard Deviations and total sum scores of the disciplines' perceived competency in language skills

Disciplines		Writing	Reading	Listening	Speaking
Social Studies	Mean	14,67	15,37	13,46	14,36
	N	76	76	76	76

Natural and Applied Sciences	Std. Deviation	2,754	2,405	3,096	2,906
	% of Total Sum	72,3%	72,5%	72,1%	72,3%
	Mean	14,76	15,31	13,62	14,38
	N	29	29	29	29
	Std. Deviation	2,400	2,422	2,871	2,513
Total	% of Total Sum	27,7%	27,5%	27,9%	27,7%
	Mean	14,70	15,35	13,50	14,36
	N	105	105	105	105
	Std. Deviation	2,650	2,398	3,023	2,791
	% of Total Sum	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

To learn whether disciplines had statistically significant effect on students' perceived skill competencies, Multivariate Tests were conducted. The results showed that disciplines had no significant effect on students' perceived sufficiency in language skills [Pillai's trace=, 002, F (4,105) =, 045, p>.05].

**Table 6:** The results of MANOVA analyses for the effect of disciplines on skills

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesisdf	Error df	Sig. (p)	
Disciplines	Pillai's Trace	,002	,045(a)	4,000	100,000	,996

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects in Table 7 revealed that disciplines had no significant effect on writing [F(1,105)= ,023, p>.05], on reading [F(1,105)= ,012, p>.05], on listening [F(1,105)= ,058, p>.05], on speaking [F(1,105)= ,002, p>.05].

**Table 7:** The results of MANOVA analyses for the effect of Disciplines on Writing, Reading, Listening, and Speaking

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Disciplines	Writing	,161	1	,161	,023	,881
	Reading	,071	1	,071	,012	,912
	Listening	,538	1	,538	,058	,810
	Speaking	,012	1	,012	,002	,969

**RQ4:** What do EFL students think about teaching materials, teaching methods and assessment system of the prep school?

A large number of students agreed that materials for reading (77, 1%), listening (56, 2%), writing skills (55, 2%), grammar (73, 3%) and authentic materials (43, 8%) were quite sufficient. On the other hand, some of the students thought speaking materials (27, 6%) were insufficient. Most students stated that methods such as asking questions, group work, lecturing, pair work, and eliciting were always used throughout classes. However, students agreed that Role plays (41, 9%),



Discussions (33, 3%), Presentations (49, 5%) were rarely preferred in classes.

Students also expressed that exams reflected the content (83, 8%), exams had positive washback effects (66, 7%), participation notes were beneficial (53, 3%), and portfolio helped them to learn better (55, 2%). On the other hand, 33, 3% of the students agreed that difficulty of exams was inconsistent and 36, 2% stated that the number of exams was very much.

**RQ5:** What do EFL students feel about the curriculum in the prep school?

Interviews held with randomly selected twenty students provided a lot of information on portfolio system, teachers, school's library, and exams. For instance, although 55, 2% of the students stated that portfolio helps them learn better, almost all of them in the interviews suggested that portfolio be done once a fortnight on the weeks when exams are not held. The students clarified that they could not study for their portfolio presentations and did not usually get into classes only to make up for portfolio presentations, notably during the exam weeks.

Another interesting finding, which is a bitter pill to swallow, is that all students stated that teachers should be more serious about classes, more talented, interested, active, dominant, and considerate. What's more, students expressed that teachers were not experienced and that they were, in fact, junior lecturers. One of the students stated that

*I do not like my English class, since our teacher is inexperienced and he threatens us with giving lower grades. I do not want to attend to classes.*

Another student stated that

*Teachers are not prepared for classes; they do not teach well'*

In addition, students revealed that the preparatory school did not have its own library or library facilities to get advantage for studying. One student expressed that

*Teachers always tell us to read books, but there is no suitable room for us to read in school.*

Another suggested that reading clubs should be founded and competitions should be organized to encourage students in school.

**RQ6:** What do EFL teachers think about the curriculum in the prep school?

Randomly selected twenty teachers were involved in interviews to search for rival explanation. Nearly all teachers agreed with students. They were also concerned about the benefits of portfolio in the school. Furthermore, teachers admitted that for portfolio assessment there was no objective grading system or grading training, notably for novice teachers; therefore, their grades were inconsistent with one another.

In addition, teachers were allowed to get into Master/PhD programs. Many teachers started any other graduate program and thus did not give much priority to teaching in preparatory school. These teachers were also busier with their academic programs. As a result, they could not be prepared for classes well. Neither could they seem as interested, active, serious and dominant as students wanted.

Teachers also thought that textbooks were selected by administrators and that their opinions were not asked. One of them, for example, stated that

*Although we are teaching, nobody asks our ideas about anything. At the end of the year, there is no meeting about what we have done during the whole year. None of us is awarded because of our good efforts in teaching.*

Another expressed that

*There is no team spirit towards teaching among teachers. The school administration does not care about in-service training. Hence, most of the teachers do not perform much more than they can.*

#### **4. Discussion**

The aim of the present research was to find out learners and teachers' needs for the innovation of the program followed in a preparatory school at an English medium University in Turkey. The students generally thought that the program emphasized four skills, grammar and vocabulary teaching. MANOVA analyses were conducted to find out if there is a significant difference between independent variables (levels and disciplines) and language skills. The analyses indicated that whereas the levels had significant effect on four language skills, disciplines did not.

With regard to the differences between levels, post-hoc sheffe tests revealed that A1 level students seemed less sufficient than B2 level students in four skills. In addition, post-hoc sheffe tests demonstrated that A2 and B1 level students' insufficiency were more than that of B2 level students in listening skill. For speaking skill, A1 level students were less sufficient in speaking than B1 level students. In short, levels had different needs and sufficiency scores, though all students thought that they were quite sufficient in skills.

The results also revealed that a higher percentage of students were positive to the materials, methods, assessment and interaction with teachers. However, students found speaking materials, role-play, discussion, and presentation activities insufficient. Interviews with students and teachers yielded interesting results, as well. While students complained about the inefficacy of teachers, teachers complained about the lack of in-service training and negotiation with administration. Students stated that teachers were junior lecturers and inexperienced. On the other hand, teachers complained about the lack of team spirit in the school. This may be because the administration permitted teachers to get into any Master/PhD program. But teachers interestingly did not master on English language teaching programs but on different disciplines such as sociology, international relations, or etc.

#### **5. Suggestions**

The present study found some important results to innovate the language curriculum of an English Preparatory School. These results helped school administrators and curriculum developers lay the foundations of their curricular decisions and syllabi. Syllabus is important, because it is a 'document which says what will (or at least what should) be learnt' (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 80). However, what is essential point is that needs of the students and syllabus design should be united in preparatory schools.

There are some suggestions for practice as follows:

- Although plenty of students considered that the program gave emphasis to four skills, and although they perceived their competence in skills quite sufficient, levels had different needs from each other. For example, A1 level students' speaking competency was less sufficient than that of both B1 and B2 level students. The fact that only 36, 2% of the students felt speaking materials 'quite sufficient' also confirmed this need, more specifically for A1 level students.
- To enrich classroom activities, especially speaking, role-play, discussion and presentation activities should be prepared for the new program.
- Since teachers can be inexperienced, in-service teacher training programs should be started in the school, particularly for the junior lecturers.
- Almost all teachers were permitted to get into any Master/PhD programs, which caused them not to be prepared for their English classes and teaching well. The school administration should let them; at least, get into the English language teaching programs so that they can develop their content and pedagogical knowledge a lot better.

- Teachers and administrators should negotiate with each other. As teachers may want to be involved in every process of teaching, they should be asked about which textbook should be followed.
- At the end of every academic year, teachers and school administration should meet and evaluate whether the aims and objectives of the program are reached.
- Teachers with higher level performance should be awarded.
- To provide objective grading for both portfolio and writing assessments, teachers should be trained and a grading sheet should be prepared by the negotiation of all teachers.
- Students, specifically in interviews, stated that portfolios and exams in the same week made them feel too tired and nervous to perform better. Portfolios should not be performed, at least, during the exam weeks.
- 44, 8% of the students agreed that difficulty of the exams is inconsistent. Interviews also confirmed this end. Many of them stated that although they studied hard, they could not get high grades because of the items in the tests. This could be attributed to the lack of a testing center in the school. Testing center should be established in language schools and items on the tests should be analyzed.

## 6. Limitations of the study

This study selected all students randomly, but nevertheless, it has some limitations that suggest a need for caution concerning the results. Firstly, the questionnaire was only given to students, not teachers. Second, prolonged observations would have yielded much more tenable results in the long run. Finally, the number of teachers who were interviewed in the study was also limited. In future studies, more teachers should be involved.

## 7. Conclusion

The present study has provided some important findings for a better curriculum. One should bear in mind that needs are changeable; thus, needs assessments should be frequently repeated. This study has revealed that levels have significant effect on learners' perceived competencies in language skills and that in-service training programs should be organized in every preparatory school to meet the changing needs of teachers as well. Permitting lecturers for master or PhD in any discipline other than language teaching programs may bear some adverse conditions for language teaching organizations. In short, all these suggestions can be considered to renew their curricular decisions.

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