

T.C.
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YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ ANABİLİM DALI
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**THE OPINIONS OF VOCATIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS
ABOUT COMPULSORY ENGLISH COURSES: WHAT DO
STUDENTS THINK?**

ZEYNEP ÖVDÜR UĞURLU

BOLU-2017

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Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Hazırlayan
Zeynep ÖVDÜR UĞURLU

Danışman
Yrd. Doç. Dr. Kadir Vefa TEZEL

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Akademik Unvan

Adı ve Soyadı

İmza

Üye (Tez Danışmanı): Yrd. Doç. Dr. Kadir Vefa TEZEL

Üye : Prof. Dr. Arif SARIÇOBAN

Üye : Yrd. Doç. Dr. Ayşe Selmin SÖYLEMEZ



Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Onayı

Prof. Dr. Türkan ARGON
Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Müdürü

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak sunduğum, “The Opinions of Vocational College Students about Compulsory English Courses: What Do Students Think?” başlıklı çalışmanın yazılmasında bilimsel ve etik kurallara uyduğumu, başkalarının eserlerinden yararlanılması durumunda atıfta bulunduğumu, kullanılan verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı tezin tamamının ya da bir kısmının bu üniversite veya başka bir üniversitede bir tez çalışması olarak sunulmadığını beyan ederim. 22/09/2017

Zeynep Övdür Uğurlu



To my dear daughter, Asya UĞURLU

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INDEX

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES.....	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VI
INDEX.....	VII
LIST OF TABLES.....	X
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	XI
ÖZET	XII
MESLEK YÜKSEKOKULU ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN ZORUNLU İNGİLİZCE DERSLERİNE İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİ: ÖĞRENCİLER NE DÜŞÜNÜYOR?	XII
ABSTRACT.....	XIV
THE OPINIONS OF VOCATIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS ABOUT COMPULSORY ENGLISH COURSES: WHAT DO STUDENTS THINK?	XIV
CHAPTER I.....	1
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. The Statement of the Problem	2
1.2. The Purpose of the Study	3
1.3. Research Questions	4
1.4. The Significance of the Study	4
1.5. The Definition of Terms.....	5
1.5.1. Vocational colleges.....	5
1.5.2. Students.....	5
1.5.3. Compulsory English courses	5
1.5.4. The compulsory English course content.....	6
CHAPTER II.....	7
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	7
2.1. Studies at University Level	7
2.2. Studies at Primary, Secondary and High School Level.....	22
2.3. Specific Studies upon Language Teaching in Turkey	29
2.3.1. Studies about students' views on foreign language	29

2.3.2. Studies about problems regarding method and class size.....	31
CHAPTER III	343
3. METHOD.....	343
3.1. Research Design	343
3.2. Sampling.....	344
3.3. Participants	37
3.4. Data Collection Instruments	38
3.5. Data Collection Procedures	40
3.6. Data Analysis.....	41
3.6.1 Validity	42
CHAPTER IV	34
4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS	34
4.1. Findings of Data Analysis Regarding the First Research Question	34
4.1.1. The criteria used in the establishment of student groups.....	45
4.1.2. First criterion – students’ GPA	45
4.1.2.1. The content of the English exams in vocational colleges	46
4.1.3. Second criterion – participating students’ opinions on defining English achievement	48
4.1.3.1. Successful students’ definitions of a “successful” student	49
4.1.3.2. Average students’ definitions of a “successful” student	50
4.1.3.3. Weak students’ definitions of a “successful” student	51
4.1.3.4. Successful students’ definitions of an “average” student	53
4.1.3.5. Average students’ definitions of an “average” student	54
4.1.3.6. Weak students’ definitions of an “average” student	55
4.1.3.7. Successful students’ definitions of a “weak” student	56
4.1.3.8. Average students’ definitions of a “weak” student	57
4.1.3.9. Weak students’ definitions of a “weak” student	59
4.1.4. Third criterion – students’ previous English education	61
4.2. Findings of Data Analysis Regarding the Second Research Question.....	63
4.2.1. Contribution of English courses in college to students’ future professional and daily lives	64
4.2.1.1. Successful students’ opinions	64

4.2.1.2. Average students' opinions	66
4.2.1.3. Weak students' opinions	69
4.2.1.4. Summary of the groups' opinions	70
4.3. Findings of Data Analysis Regarding the Third Research Question.....	72
4.3.1. Successful students' opinions	73
4.3.2. Average students' opinions.....	77
4.3.3. Weak students' opinions	82
4.3.4. Summary of the groups' opinions.....	83
4.4. Findings of Data Analysis Regarding the Fourth Research Question	86
4.4.1. Successful students' opinions	86
4.4.2. Average students' opinions.....	89
4.4.3. Weak students' opinions	91
4.4.4. Summary of the groups' opinions.....	92
CHAPTER V	45
5. CONCLUSION	45
5.1. Limitations of the Study	98
5.2. Suggestions for Further Research.....	99
REFERENCES	102
APPENDICE	107
ACADEMIC BACKGROUND	108

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1. Profile information of the students in the EC group.....	37
Table 3.2. Profile information of the students in the SS group	38
Table 4.1. Student achievement in the English course	46
Table 4.2. Characteristics of a “successful” student by all groups	53
Table 4.3. Characteristics of an “average” student by all groups	56
Table 4.4. Characteristics of a “weak” student by all groups	60
Table 4.5. Types of high school successful students graduated from.....	61
Table 4.6. Types of high school average students graduated from.....	62
Table 4.7. Types of high school weak students graduated from.....	63
Table 4.8. Successful students’ opinions about the contribution of the English courses	66
Table 4.9. Average students’ opinions about the contribution of the English courses ...	69
Table 4.10. Weak students’ opinions about the contribution of the English courses	70
Table 4.11. Summary of the groups’ opinions.....	71
Table 4.12. Summary of the groups’ opinions about the contribution of the English courses to their lives	72
Table 4.13. Successful students’ opinions about the usefulness of college English courses	76
Table 4.14. Average students’ opinions about the usefulness of college English courses	81
Table 4.15. Weak students’ opinions about the usefulness of college English courses .	83
Table 4.16. Summary of the groups’ opinions.....	84
Table 4.17. Summary of the groups’ opinions on the usefulness of English courses	85
Table 4.18. Successful students’ opinions	88
Table 4.19. Average students’ opinions.....	91
Table 4.20. Weak students’ opinions.....	92
Table 4.21. Summary of the groups’ opinions.....	93
Table 4.22. Opinions of all groups	94

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATVHS	: Anatolian Trade Vocational High School
AVHS	: Anatolian Vocational High School
CEFR	: Common European Framework of Reference
EC	: Electronic Communication
GPA	: Grade point average
HS	: High school
IVHS	: Industrial Vocational High School
MPHS	: Multi-Program High School
RHS	: Regular High School
Ss	: Students
SS	: Social Security
THS	: Trade High School
TVHS	: Trade Vocational High School

ÖZET

MESLEK YÜKSEKOKULU ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN ZORUNLU İNGİLİZCE DERSLERİNE İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİ: ÖĞRENCİLER NE DÜŞÜNÜYOR?

Övdür Uğurlu, Zeynep

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin zorunlu İngilizce derslerinin gelecekteki mesleki ve günlük yaşantılarına olan katkısıyla ve bu derslerin hangi ölçüde yararlı ve gerekli olduğuyla ilgili görüşlerini bulmaktır. Bu araştırma araştırmacının çalışmakta olduğu kurumda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada 16 katılımcı yer almıştır; bu katılımcıların 8'i Elektronik Haberleşme bölümünde, 8'i ise Sosyal Güvenlik bölümündedir. Tüm katılımcılar, Düzce Üniversitesi Düzce Meslek Yüksekokulu'nda okuyan birinci sınıf öğrencileridir ve çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmışlardır.

Çalışmanın verileri doküman analizi ve yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Doküman analizi üç amaç için kullanılmıştır: bunlar öğrencilerin mezun oldukları okul türünü öğrenmek, ilk dönem zorunlu İngilizce derslerinden aldıkları ortalama notu elde etmek ve öğrencileri İngilizce dersindeki performanslarına göre gruplandırmaktır.

Yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler farklı tarihlerde her bir öğrenci için bireysel olarak ve Türkçe dilinde yapılmıştır. Dört açık-uçlu soru ve alt-soruları katılımcıların, İngilizce derslerindeki performansları bakımından meslek yüksekokullarındaki başarılı, orta ve zayıf seviyedeki öğrencilerin özellikleri, İngilizce derslerinin gelecek mesleki yaşamlarına ve günlük hayatlarına katkısı, bu derslerin yararlılığı ve gerekliliği

hakkında görüşlerini elde etmek amacıyla sorulmuştur.

Doküman analizi ile elde edilen bilgiler “orta” seviyenin meslek yüksekokullarındaki zorunlu İngilizce derslerindeki öğrenci performansını tanımlayan terim olduğunu ve “orta” seviyedeki bir öğrencinin geçer not almak için yeterli sayıda çoktan seçmeli dilbilgisi, kelime bilgisi ve okuma sorularını yanıtlayabilen bir öğrenci olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Anadolu lisesi mezunlarının İngilizce derslerinde daha başarılı olacağının beklentisinin aksine, bu çalışmanın bulguları göstermiştir ki başarılı ve orta seviyedeki öğrenciler Anadolu lisesi mezunu değildir ve zayıf seviyedeki öğrencilerin biri Anadolu lisesi mezunudur. Bu sonuçlara göre mezun olunan lise türü katılımcı meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin İngilizce dersindeki başarısında bir faktör değildir.

Değerlendirmenin sonunda, öğrencilerin görüşme sorularına verdiği yanıtlar tüm öğrencilerin üretken beceri olan konuşma becerisi bakımından kendilerini zayıf olarak gördüğünü göstermiştir; çünkü ezberlenmiş öğeleri kullanarak sadece kelime veya ifade seviyesinde İngilizce konuşabilmektedirler. Bölümlerine bakılmaksızın, öğrencilerin çoğunluğu meslek yüksekokullarındaki İngilizce derslerinin gelecekte mesleki yaşamlarına katkıda bulunacağını belirtmişlerdir. Fakat, Elektronik Haberleşme ve Sosyal Güvenlik bölümlerinde öğrenciler İngilizce derslerinin katkısı hakkındaki görüşlerini açıklamak için farklı sebepler belirtmişlerdir. Öğrencilerin neredeyse tamamı meslek yüksekokullarındaki İngilizce derslerini yararlı bulmamıştır. Derslerin “hiç yararlı değil” veya “pek yararlı değil” olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. İngilizce derslerinin içeriğinin hep aynı olduğunu ve dolayısıyla yeni İngilizce bir şeyler öğrenmediklerini belirtmişlerdir. Öğrencilerin çoğunluğu meslek yüksek okullarındaki İngilizce derslerini gerekli bulmuştur. Fakat, Elektronik Haberleşme ve Sosyal Güvenlik bölümlerindeki öğrenciler gereklilik için farklı nedenler belirtmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Meslek Yüksekokulları, Öğrenciler, Zorunlu İngilizce Dersleri, Zorunlu İngilizce Dersi İçeriği

ABSTRACT

THE OPINIONS OF VOCATIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS ABOUT COMPULSORY ENGLISH COURSES: WHAT DO STUDENTS THINK?

Övdür Uğurlu, Zeynep

M. Sc. Thesis

The Department of Foreign Language Teaching

The Department of English Language Teaching

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Kadir Vefa Tezel

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The aim of this study is to find out the opinions of vocational college students about the contribution of the compulsory English courses to their future professional and daily lives and the usefulness and the necessity of these courses. This study was conducted in the university the researcher was working for. There were 16 participants in this study, 8 of them were in the Electronic Communication department and 8 of them were in the Social Security department. All participants were first-year students at Düzce Vocational College, Düzce University, and they voluntarily participated in the study.

The data were gathered through document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Document analysis was used for three purposes: these are to identify the types of high school students graduated from, the grade they obtained in the first-term compulsory English courses, and to place them into groups according to their grades.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by each student individually on different dates and in Turkish. Four open-ended questions were asked to obtain participants' opinions about the characteristics of successful, average, and weak students' in the vocational college in terms of their performance in English classes, the contribution of the English courses in college to their future professional and daily lives, the usefulness and the necessity of those courses.

The information gathered through document analysis reveal that “average” is the term which define student performance in the compulsory English courses in vocational college and an “average” student is the one who is able to answer enough number of multiple-choice grammar, vocabulary, and reading items on the tests correctly to achieve a passing grade. Contrary to the general expectation that the graduates of Anatolian high school types would be more successful in English courses, the findings of this study showed that the leading students in the successful and average groups were graduates of non-Anatolian high school types, and that one of the two students in the weak group was a graduate of an Anatolian high school type. These results showed that the type of high school was not a factor in the English achievement of the participating vocational college students.

The students’ answers to the interview questions firstly showed that all students considered themselves weak in terms of the productive skill of speaking as they could at best speak English only at word or phrase level, using memorized items. The majority of the students, regardless of their department, mentioned that the English courses in college would contribute to their future professional lives. However, the students in the Electronic Communication and Social Security departments stated different reasons to explain their opinions about the contribution of the English courses. Nearly all of the students did not find the English courses in vocational college useful. They stated that the courses were either “not useful at all” or “not very useful”. They stated that the content of the English courses was repetitive, and, therefore, they were not able to learn any new English. The majority of the students found the English courses in college necessary. However, the students in the EC and SS groups stated different reasons for the necessity.

Key words: Vocational Colleges, Students, Compulsory English Courses, The compulsory English course content

CHAPTER I

1. Introduction

Language education is a wide research area. There have been a number of studies on languages, teaching approaches, methods, techniques, students, students' attitudes, teachers, and the factors that play a role in teaching and learning process. Current implementations and the general situation of language education in our country are also among the most common topics discussed in a wide number of papers, conferences, and seminars.

In Turkey, English language education begins in the second grade of primary schools as a compulsory course in all Turkish state schools according to the foreign language teaching regulations of the Ministry of National Education, and it continues at universities. Besides, private and state preschools include language classes in their curricula. At universities, there are compulsory English courses in the first year or there are compulsory or elective English preparatory classes depending on the regulations of each university. Therefore, learning English has become an indispensable part of the curricula implemented in all types of schools.

Throughout the history of English language teaching in Turkey, many innovations have been introduced either individually by schools or universities or globally by the Ministry of National Education and Council of Higher Education. There exists the question of how much distance has been covered.

Since the 1980s, language teaching in Turkey has been discussed in many articles. One study conducted by Develioğlu (1987) mentioned about the problems and solutions of foreign language teaching in Turkish schools. In his research, sixty

different schools and six language courses were examined to get a picture of the conditions for foreign language teaching in that era. He identified significant problems, which were crowded classes, lack of useful materials and equipment, insufficient programs and methods, multi-level students in the same classes, unmotivated students, and disqualified teachers. Similarly, Aktaş (1987) pointed out the same problems in his article by stating that necessary precautions should be taken as soon as possible to overcome these difficulties. These two examples may date back to the period of the 1980s, but new studies report the same issues as the current problems. In a meeting conducted at Muğla University in 2008, problems of foreign language teaching in the foreign language departments and colleges in Turkey were discussed from a wide variety of perspectives. Ulu, Kademli and Hastürk (2008) made a study which is a good reflection of how many different views and examples were debated during that meeting. They focused on course books used in the compulsory English courses at vocational colleges and examined how useful they were in terms of students' levels. They drew attention to the problems in course books as they claimed that course books placed emphasis on only the grammatical features of the language, and that was the reason why students could not develop speaking skills.

As can be seen from the above studies from two different decades, it is not difficult to conclude that there has not been much improvement in practice. Students and teachers have nearly the same problems and these problems are still waiting to be solved. This research aims to provide a limited synopsis of this problem in Turkey and makes an analysis of English language teaching in vocational colleges at a higher education institution from the perspectives of students who are the beneficiaries of the English language instruction in Turkish universities' vocational schools.

1.1. The Statement of the Problem

In Turkish universities, in vocational colleges, and in many departments, there is a compulsory two or four-hour a week English course. Whether this course is enough

for students to learn English is an issue that has not been investigated. Furthermore, the targeted level at the end of the instruction is not clearly defined.

There has not been a specific study on how students at vocational colleges perceive English as a foreign language and learning this language at the university level. This gap forms the basis of this study in that it focuses on exploring students' perceptions of the compulsory English course.

Another gap in our collective knowledge of foreign language instruction in higher education institutions is the identification of vocational college students' opinions about English as a course and the process of learning English. There is no study which investigated what kind of opinions these students have as foreign language learners.

Furthermore, no study in the literature has attempted to analyse students' characteristics at vocational colleges either; therefore, the need to describe these students' qualities has arisen. The information gathered about students' features as learners, their educational background, their type, duration, and frequency of contact with English, and how those features shape their perceptions and attitudes has not been investigated.

In sum, there has been no thorough attempt to get a detailed description of the students' qualities, their perceptions of English as a foreign language, and attitudes towards the course at Turkish university vocational schools. Thus, this study focuses on underlying factors influential in the learning process of those students capturing their perspectives.

1.2. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold:

The first is to identify the characteristics of vocational college students in terms of their academic performance in the English courses and from their own perspectives.

The second is to capture those students' opinions about the:

- contribution of the English courses to their future professional and daily lives,
- usefulness of the English courses in their schools, and
- necessity of the English courses in their schools.

1.3. Research Questions

This study will be conducted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the successful, average, and weak students in the English courses in vocational colleges?
2. What are the students' opinions about the contribution of the English courses to their future professional and daily lives?
3. What are the students' opinions about the usefulness of the English courses in vocational college? In what respects do the students find the courses useful? Why?
4. What are the students' opinions about the necessity of the English courses currently taught in vocational college?

1.4. The Significance of the Study

This study aims to investigate how students form opinions and perceptions towards learning English as a foreign language course they take in vocational college. To that end, it obtains students' opinions about themselves as learners, the compulsory English courses, and the issues that affect their learning.

1.5. The Definition of Terms

The terms which are going to be defined in the following sections are vocational colleges, students, compulsory English courses, the compulsory English course content.

1.5.1. Vocational colleges

There are nine vocational colleges at Düzce University which include social sciences departments and technical departments. In this study, in one vocational college, one technical department (Electronic Communication), and one social sciences department (Social Security) were selected as departments from students of which data would be collected. Students from these departments were selected to identify whether they have similar or different reasons for learning English, their profiles, opinions, needs, and perceptions of English and English language teaching in their schools.

1.5.2. Students

Students in this study were all first-year students in two different departments of Düzce Vocational College of Düzce University. There were 16 students and they were attending the Electronic Communication (henceforth, EC) department and Social Security (henceforth, SS) department.

1.5.3. Compulsory English courses

In Turkish universities, in all faculties and vocational schools there is a compulsory English course in the first year. These courses are generally conducted two or four hours a week. English instructors teach in these courses and students have to take and pass it as they are compulsory.

1.5.4. The compulsory English course content

The English course content is designed for the vocational college of this study based on the descriptors of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The goal of the first term two-hour-a-week or four-hour-a-week courses is to help students complete A1 level, and the goal for the second term English courses with the same number of class hours is to prepare students to complete A2 level.



CHAPTER II

2. Review of Literature

The studies that deal with the issue of foreign language education in Turkey are classified into three different categories in this study: the first category is the studies that focus on English language teaching at higher education, the second one is the studies that focus on English language teaching at high school level, and the third is those that examine English language teaching from different perspectives. Hence, this chapter consists of three parts. Studies at university level will be presented in the first part. In the second part, studies at primary, secondary, and high school level will be reviewed and summarized. In the third section, studies about the overall condition of language teaching in Turkey are going to be introduced.

2.1. Studies at University Level

This section presents studies that are relevant to the scope of this study; they examine how English is taught in Turkish universities by getting students' and teachers' opinions. Various conclusions are made and presented in each study, and they reflect what has been going on in the English courses at universities from either instructors' perspectives or students' perspectives.

One of the early studies on this matter was carried out by Gülmez (1982). The purpose of the study was to examine the factors that affect learning foreign language and finding out to what extent these factors influence the period of learning. All students and teachers in the preparatory classes at the Middle East Technical University, Gaziantep Campus, in the 1980-1981 academic year were included in that descriptive research. Data were collected, using student information forms, questionnaires to determine students' attitudes, cultural awareness, study skills, opinions about course

content, method, and teachers' behaviors, and student evaluation forms which were filled out by two different teachers to identify students' attitudes and approaches towards English lessons; and finally, achievement tests to use the scores for defining student achievement. The researcher evaluated achievement tests' scores in order to make comparisons between students' success and their ideas about language learning. Additionally, the observations made during this study and the interviews conducted with teachers and students were taken into account while evaluating the results.

The data which were collected from questionnaires, interviews and observations during the instruction period helped to find out what students generally thought about the language teaching process in a preparatory class. The results revealed two main concerns. While a group of students suggested that grammar should be studied more, some of them supported that speaking skill was more important. Also, the majority of the students mentioned that they had difficulties with speaking skills and learning a foreign language actually meant speaking. Most of them thought that the use of language laboratories was not at a sufficient level and they could not make use of this facility adequately. There were also data gathered from teachers through student evaluation forms and their observations and interviews with the students. At the end of the year, teachers made a definition of successful students. According to that definition, successful students were more active without feeling shy in classes. They were more motivated to speak and use the language more accurately. They did not have a fear of making mistakes. Achievement tests' results and students' attitudes showed a correlation in that successful students had positive attitudes towards teachers and language lessons.

All in all, this study's main purpose was to find out the factors effective in language learning and the results showed those factors were students' background profiles, their attitudes towards language learning and behaviors in language lessons, and also the activities and techniques used in language classes. Those were found to be highly influential in the process of language teaching and learning in this specific study group and context.

Another study which observed both students' and instructors' views was conducted by Sözer (1984) at Ankara University, Education Faculty. The focus of the study was not on teaching Basic English; the researcher tried to evaluate the overall implications of foreign language teaching in science and professional lives of students, instead. Additionally, attaining instructors' and students' ideas and attitudes on the issue, and coming up with some suggestions for developing foreign language programs were the other aims of the research. 25 universities where the medium of instruction was not English were chosen for data collection. Interviews and questionnaires were used as research tools. Two different scales were used for the instructors and fourth year students.

The scale for instructors showed that 16,8% of instructors did not have teaching certificates and qualifications of teachers could not be assessed as perfect since most of them had not been educated in the field of language education. Besides, there were no specific departments at universities where the goal was to educate language teachers who were supposed to work at universities. The excessive workload of instructors was another issue as it prevented teachers from improving themselves professionally.

As for the perspectives of the participant students, the results showed that the failure of students mostly stemmed from inadequate English instruction at high school, their lack of interest and motivation in English, and the intensity of the courses in their own departments.

The instructors' opinions show consistency with students' ideas in terms of methodology and teaching conditions. According to both instructors and students, reading skill was given the most importance of all the skills, which was followed by listening and speaking, respectively. The grammar-translation method was the most commonly used method during those years. Lastly, the factors that interfered with conducting useful classes were listed as the poor quality of course books and language laboratories, number of hours of instruction which were quite limited, students' lack of interest and crowded classes. Although Sözer's study seems to have focused on teaching

professional English at first sight, it sheds light on the situation of foreign language education during those times.

Similar to the previous study above, Tümer (1986) decided to investigate foreign language education at universities which was seen as a crucial national problem at that time even though he clearly stated that he was not a specialist in the field and that he merely tried to share his experiences and observations. The difference of this study from Sözer's (1984) study was that Tümer did not only focus on teaching English for professional purposes, and the scope of his research study was language education at universities in general, and he also searched for only students' ideas. Before developing a questionnaire to capture the students' opinions about various issues, the views of four instructors' working at Istanbul Sciences Economics and Commerce Academy in 1982 were sought about the current condition of language teaching. In the light of those views, the questions were about students' background and profile information, their attendance and their reasons for attendance to language classes, the content, method, instruction hours of language lessons, and finally language laboratories and course materials. Students were also asked to give their further suggestions about improving the quality language teaching in their faculties.

As this study included all the students in the academy from the first year to the fourth year, there were both novice and experienced students. Having analyzed the answers, Tümer found out that the students who filled out the questionnaires were the ones who attended classes regularly and were mostly the graduate of high schools where there was no foreign language education. Students' attendance problem was another issue that was reflected in the questionnaires. Mostly, students agreed with the questionnaire statement "I had not been able to learn basic English grammar during my education in primary and high school, that's why I cannot follow the lessons". This revealed that students' previous experiences affected their language learning at university in that they thought they did not have the basic English grammar knowledge compulsory for further study. When students' suggestions for language courses were asked for, there were two common answers; the first was "Practice should be emphasized for daily and professional needs". And, the second was "Basic grammar

knowledge should be emphasized”. Other suggestions made by the students are summarized below:

- The courses should start from the basic level.
- Classes should be less-crowded and be appropriate to the proficiency levels of students.
- Lessons should be conducted on different days as it would be boring otherwise and the number of teaching hours should be increased.
- Instructors should assign regular homework and frequent exams, and give more help and opportunities for extra practice for weak students.
- Teachers should not talk in English all the time and some explanations could be made in Turkish.
- There could be native teachers as well.
- Various course books should be used and the monotony of the classes should be eliminated.
- There should be a language laboratory and a library to make use of.

All in all, Tümer’s study draws a clear picture of what was going on at universities in terms of language teaching during 1980s. There were many problems mentioned by the students and they presented suggestions for a better language education in their universities.

Another study dealing with the same issue but from another perspective can be included in this part. This time, the data were gathered by only getting instructors’ ideas. Ceyhan (1982) investigated foreign language programs in Turkish universities with a view to determining the implementations in terms of instructors’ qualifications, students’ qualifications, goals, English course content, materials, methods, students’ motivation, hours of instruction, assessment and evaluation, and 330 instructors in language departments from all universities in Turkey which numbered 19 in 1982 took part in the research. For data collection, information forms and questionnaires were used. Questionnaires were answered by the instructors. The results can be summarized below:

- Four skills were used in balance.

- While half of the teachers believed the objectives were clear and detailed, the other half did not think so.
- Instructors working in English-medium universities thought that foreign language education would be helpful in students' majors.
- Most of the instructors did not believe that students would get into contact with English outside the university after class.
- The main materials were course books which were not thought to be related to goals of the English courses.
- The grammar-translation method was heavily used.
- The use of the native language was common and communicative techniques such as role-plays were not highly used.
- Students were not interested in English in the desired level.
- Hours of instruction were lesser than enough.
- While English-medium universities' teachers evaluated language programs as effective, the other ones did not hold the same opinions.

This study revealed that instructors encountered with problems in the process of language teaching as well. They did not want to use the same methods all the time and they wanted to be more communicative. They also thought hours of instruction were not enough to reach a certain proficiency level. When compared to the results of the studies above, teachers and students held the same opinions about certain issues.

These concerns about language education were not only discussed in research studies, they were also analyzed in some books. For instance, in his book "Yüksek Öğretim Kurumlarımızda Yabancı Dil İzlemleri", Sebüktekin (1987) wrote about that era's conditions of language teaching by focusing on schools, administrators, instructors, methodology, and students. Some problems and possible solutions were listed in detail; some of the problems were: lack of enough number of teachers, disqualified teachers in terms of language and methodology knowledge, crowded classes, lack of interest and motivation among students, defining language education as an improvement of culture or brain gymnastics, students' goal of passing the course or getting good grades, lack of opportunities outside the classroom to use the target

language, intensity of other courses, no flexibility in the curriculum, lack of useful equipment, lack of attempts to encourage students (specifically the weak ones), too much work-load of teachers, insufficient wages of instructors, and lastly no chance for instructors to improve themselves professionally.

All of these studies above draw a picture of language education at universities in the 1980s. Later studies should be observed in order to see how much progress has been made about language teaching and learning. Hence, below some example studies conducted in the 1990s and the 2000s will be presented.

Language teaching in compulsory courses was the main point of Kaçmaz's (1992) study in which he observed the attitudes and behaviors of the students of Buca Faculty of Education of the Dokuz Eylül University towards English as a compulsory course. 160 randomly chosen first-year students were asked to fill out a foreign language attitude scale that consisted of both open-ended and close-ended questions. Students' answers would reflect their attitudes towards learning a foreign language. The findings are relatively similar to the ones gathered in the previous studies which were conducted in 1980s. There was underachievement in English teaching. Classes were filled with students at different proficiency levels. Students were willing to learn a foreign language in order to find a better job, but their negative previous learning experiences and the current conditions demotivated them. Among the other problems students mentioned were inefficient materials used (The only material was the course book.), crowded classes, and lack of qualified teachers.

In another state university in Turkey, a similar study was conducted with the help of first-year students in order to discuss the situation and problem of English language teaching. In this study, Tayhani's (1993) purpose was to suggest a model for Celal Bayar University, Manisa Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences and other higher education institutes where English had been taught as a compulsory course. An attitude scale was used to collect relevant data from the first-year students of Manisa Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences. It consisted of three parts; the first part included questions to obtain personal information about students, the second one

consisted of statements to obtain students' attitudes and ideas of learning a foreign language, and the last part composed of questions, through which students made an assessment of the present situation and the future learning process. Most of the students reported that their background knowledge was too weak, which arose from the poor quality of language teaching system. Besides, students indicated the learning difficulties they had confronted in heterogeneous classes in terms of proficiency levels and during insufficient hours of instruction. In general, students showed awareness of the requirement of learning a foreign language for their professional development; they stated that they did not believe they would be able to achieve this goal with the present education system, though. In the light of these findings, the researcher made some suggestions to improve the current situation of language teaching. These suggestions can be summarized as: regulating English preparatory classes instead of restricted service lessons would provide the best conditions for language learning as three-hour a week instruction would never be enough to prepare students to study in academic settings where the medium of instruction was English.

Tayhani's research findings and suggestions focus on the poor quality of compulsory English courses in faculties as these lessons will never be sufficient enough to serve as language classes. Hence, the solution suggested for this issue is to implement English preparatory classes for all students. However, some studies mentioned above in this part showed similar problems in English preparatory classes.

More examples should be observed to broaden the perspective of researchers in terms of current implementations of language teaching in Turkish universities. Thus, another study about English courses at universities will be displayed in this part. As it can be understood from its title "Alternative Suggestions to the Problems in Service English Lessons at Muğla University the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences", Gökdemir (1998) observed the condition of foreign language teaching in compulsory English courses. A survey was prepared by the researcher and used to collect first or second-year students' opinions about the topic. At the end of the study, some suggestions were put forward in the light of the problems reported in the data. The factors called out to be the problems affecting language learning were classified into

three parts: problems related to the learner, the teacher, and the system. Not surprisingly, the problems were similar to the ones mentioned in the earlier studies and could be summarized as students' lack of involvement in the teaching/learning process and motivation, their individualistic differences, their lack of chances to practice English out of the classroom, crowded classes, limited time (only three hours a week), language lessons having no credit, no effort by teachers to improve themselves, giving no importance to practice; focusing on theory instead, teachers' dominance, no analysis of students' needs, interests, and learning styles, inappropriate books, multi-level students, no continuity of the English courses in the following years. These factors were reported to be directly influencing students' achievement in learning English.

Gökdemir's study brought out some different issues to discuss as the data included needs, interests, and learning styles. The results showed the importance of designing a program by taking these factors into account. Otherwise, students will encounter some problems during instruction period.

The following two studies conducted by Gömleksiz are the other examples of research, the purpose of which was to detect how language education continued at universities. Both the teachers' and learners' opinions were consulted in order to observe the matter from two different perspectives. Those studies were conducted at different times.

Gömleksiz (1993) dealt with the issue of foreign language education and its problems in higher education. Two different questionnaires were developed for instructors at Foreign Languages Department of the Firat University, and all the students were second-year students in all faculties of the Firat University in the 1992-1993 academic year. The data revealed that most of the students studying at Firat University did not come to the university with a sufficient level of foreign language knowledge. Students had taken language courses under insufficient conditions during their education in secondary and high schools. Most of the students stated that it was essential to learn and know a foreign language as speaking a foreign language would help them to find a job easily, follow foreign sources related to their professions, get

higher education, make friends with foreigners easily, and get to know foreign cultures. These data clarified that most of the students had an awareness of benefits of learning a foreign language.

The results of the study also showed that girls were more concerned about learning a foreign language when compared to the boys. 26,3% students preferred language courses to be elective. Both students and instructors accepted that foreign language teaching was not at a sufficient level and suggested achieving more efficient levels only if the classes were made according students' proficiency levels through placement exams and supplying preparatory classes. This was the same point where students and instructors had met.

Most of the instructors pointed out that they used the traditional “grammar-translation” method and did not employ modern language teaching methods and techniques in their teachings. Another significant finding was that students did not study English sufficiently and did not have any contact with English outside the classroom. Course books were among the problems that students faced in that they were not suitable for their interests and cultural levels and too difficult for their levels of knowledge. Moreover, some students believed that in these courses they could understand but could not speak and they were able to translate professional sources by using a dictionary. However, there were some students stating that they could not develop any language skills. Students made suggestions as to how to conduct the classes, which would focus on practice related to daily life or professional topics and basic grammar knowledge and would give students chances of reading professional publications and books or making translations.

These data pointed out some difficulties that students and teachers confronted in language classes in university. Gömleksiz made another study on this matter at the same university nearly ten years later and this time vocational college students were involved in the study as well. However, there were no instructors who participated in this study.

Gömleksiz (2002) carried out this research in order to identify how efficient foreign language education was at university level by getting students' views. Data were collected through questionnaires filled out by all students in the second year of Technical Education, Education, Medicine, Aquaculture, Veterinary Science, Science and Literature, Engineering, and Physical Training and Sports College, Technical, and Social Sciences Vocational Colleges of the Fırat University in the 2000-2001 academic year. As for the results of the study, similar to the previous studies, students came to the university without a good knowledge of foreign language as they did not take courses from teachers who were trained in English language teaching and sometimes there was no teacher during their years in secondary education. Despite these difficulties, students found it necessary to learn a foreign language. However, they believed that foreign language teaching they received was not sufficient due to the limited number of lessons per-week, inefficient methods and techniques used by the instructors, and lack of equipment. Most of the students found the course books too difficult for their levels and they believed those books did not help them to study for language courses in the desired level. Students mentioned that they did not do assignments since they were above their proficiency levels. The majority of the students had high level of interest in English whereas there were still some whose interests were low because of their previous experience of learning, study habits, and lack of motivation. Consulting supplementary resources, getting help from more successful friends and instructors, attending private courses were among the ways which students used so as to deal with their problems of learning. 23.91% students reported that they were able to understand but could not speak English, 22.26% learners were able to make translations of professional publications; however, 35.9% of the students reported that they did not develop any language skills still in university level. Finally, students thought that it was important to learn basic grammar together with speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills. This showed that they believed the importance of integrating four skills and they wanted to have the accuracy while improving these language skills.

When the same author's study in 1993 was compared with the one in 2002, it can easily be seen that there was not much progress in language teaching in the

university level. Students still had similar problems, and that was why they did not learn English effectively.

The studies in which the condition of foreign language teaching in the 1990s have been presented in this chapter so far. Newer studies will be shown in order to compare whether any improvement has been made or not. The following studies were conducted in the 2000s in different contexts.

To begin with, Çakıcı (2007) tried to highlight the relationship between university students' attitudes towards English in compulsory courses and their sex, departments, and types of high schools they graduated from. In order to reach this aim, the researcher administered an attitude scale towards English developed on her own to 427 first-year students in the Social Sciences Department (History, Geography, Social Studies), the Applied Science Department (Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Computer Education), the Fine Arts Department (Music and Arts), the Turkish Language Department (Turkish Language and Literature, Turkish Language Teaching), Primary Education Department , and finally, Izmir Vocational Institute of Higher Education. Rather than the afore-mentioned studies, Çakıcı (2007) worked on the attitudes of the students. Students' answers in the attitude scales showed that they generally had negative attitudes towards English courses. This study brings out the need to take some action about helping students to develop more positive attitudes towards learning English in compulsory courses in university. There are some other studies conducted in order to highlight what can be done to make things better in compulsory English courses and the examples of these studies will be presented in the next parts.

For instance, Çakır (2007) tried to give some alternative suggestions about the current situation of teaching a foreign language in compulsory courses at Turkish state universities by detecting some problems. The first-year students in Kırıkkale University were asked some general questions about their profile information in English to assess their proficiency levels. Besides, a needs analysis form was administered to them so that their language learning needs could be identified. The factors affecting students' learning processes obtained via the data were not so different from the previously

conducted studies. Not giving much importance to language learning, mixed ability classes, deficiencies in curriculum, students' lack of motivation, inadequate previous education, lack of useful teaching materials, textbooks chosen without the consideration of students' needs, cultural backgrounds, interests, students' rights for not attending to 30% of the courses, poor organization of weekly schedules in terms of language courses were the specific factors summarized. The researcher pointed out that the responsible people should take precautions in the light of these findings as soon as possible.

Çakır drew a picture of the current situation of English language teaching in Kırıkkale University. He pointed out several issues which caused problems in conducting English courses, and it was nearly impossible to reach the objectives ruled by the Council of Higher Education at the end of these courses. An example from another Turkish state university will be shown in the following part.

Kayrak (2010) aimed to contribute to the qualitative improvement of teaching foreign languages at university level by detecting the problems and expectations through students' eyes. In this study, a questionnaire which consisted of two sections and 19 questions was given to 1880 students at 11 faculties and 7 schools of Istanbul University. The questions were developed to find out students' opinions about the necessity and reasons of learning a foreign language, the quality of their previous learning experiences, their opportunities to learn another foreign language, the quality of present language learning process, and the issue of whether language courses should be compulsory or elective.

The findings showed that most of the students thought English teaching was not sufficient in secondary and high school. 73,6% of the students found it necessary to learn a foreign language, mostly the reasons stated were to make progress in their professions, to find a job, to get to know different cultures, to be able to communicate with foreigners, and to learn the related concepts to their professions. While students' opinions about the need to learn more than one foreign language were positive, they told that they did not have the opportunity to do so during elementary and secondary education. Students reported that they had difficulties mostly in speaking and grammar,

believed in the importance of using technology in language teaching, and thought that English classes should be more than four hours a week. While the percentage of the students thinking foreign language education should be elective was 43%, the percentage of the students who supported that foreign language teaching should be compulsory was 58%.

The data revealed that although students felt the need to learn English as it was crucial for their education, profession, and daily life, they had some obstacles because of poor teaching and learning conditions. Hence, if some improvements are made, students may be more willing to learn. Perhaps, they will have positive attitudes towards the courses. It is also important to learn about the affective factors influential in teaching and learning process. One example study was conducted by Tok in 2010.

Tok (2010) had a different approach, and he conducted a survey to examine students' affective attitudes according to some variables, which were gender, disciplines, family economic status, and the education level of parents. The study was conducted in İnönü University, in the departments of Mathematics, Physics, Biology, and Social Sciences. The participants were randomly chosen first-year students. A likert type "English Affective Domain Attitude Scale" was used as the research tool. The results showed that female students and learners with high levels of income had positive affective attitudes. The ones whose mothers were high school graduates had more positive attitudes than the ones whose mothers were primary school graduates and illiterate. The situation was a little different in terms of fathers' education as affective attitudes of students whose fathers were university graduates and illiterate were more positive than the attitudes of the students whose fathers were primary and high school graduates. The affective attitudes of the students in the departments of Mathematics and Biology were more favorable than those of ones whose majors were Physics and Social Sciences. More than half of the students were observed to have positive affective attitudes towards English courses and were willing to learn although they were found to be anxious about learning a foreign language at the same time. These results revealed that parents' and teachers' role was to motivate the students and raise their consciousness in order to encourage them to learn.

The conditions of schools, the quality of teachers, teaching methods, and materials together with students' proficiency levels and motivation to learn a language have been observed in all of the studies so far. However, Tok brought out a different perspective in his study and it showed that affective factors highly influence the process of learning English. Before ending the part of studies about universities, one more example will be given as the following study includes many useful details about the things previously discussed.

The research study was conducted by Güneş (2011) with the first-year students of Medicine, Engineering, and Law Faculties in Dicle University. In this study, the aim of the researcher was to survey the connection between language achievement and possible factors effective in learners' success. The researcher examined the starting age of learning English as a foreign language, kind of high school students graduated from, students' attitudes, and students' contact with the other languages they knew or spoke in their environments. 105 participants filled out a questionnaire that consisted of two parts; the first part included questions about students' background information on starting age of English learning, type of high school they graduated from, their opportunities to improve language learning, and other languages they knew. The second part was composed of items that aimed to learn students' attitudes. Placement tests were also conducted so that students' language competencies could be found. Accordingly, 12 students were chosen, half of whom had a score of below 20 over 100%, and the others had above 40 over 100% to be interviewed. In individual interviews, students were asked what they thought about language learning process and their achievements or failures. The findings indicated that beginning learning English at an early age was not much advantageous, high school was very important in terms of English proficiency; using more than one language was not so influential in English competence, there was no connection between learners' attitudes and their language proficiencies, getting into contact with English outside the classroom was highly useful, and some factors causing difficulties in the learning process were listed as grammar-based instruction, the repetitive of the same classroom techniques, lack of opportunities to practice, and high anxiety of students.

The interviews made by the researcher gave the data to understand what students generally thought about English courses in their university. The results were similar to the other studies results' as they highlighted that both affective factors and the conditions of language education were influential in the learning process.

All in all, various examples of studies were given in this part in order to clarify how successful our universities are in language education. Some problems were underlined and some factors were found be more influential than the other. Yet, it is not enough to observe the condition only in universities as language instruction is important in the primary, secondary, and high school level as well. In the following part, the condition of these schools will be presented in order to draw the whole picture of Turkish schools in terms of language education.

2.2. Studies at Primary, Secondary and High School Level

In this part, studies on language education in primary, secondary and high schools will be presented by referring to specific results of some research. An example study was carried out by Kayahan (2003) at Sakarya University. The main purpose of the research was to find out whether foreign language education reached its goals in primary schools and to point out certain problems faced. It was a qualitative research study in which questionnaires, observations, interviews, and literature review were used as research tools. A questionnaire titled Problems of Foreign Language Education in East Marmara Region was applied to the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students at state schools in the province of Sakarya. Students to be interviewed were chosen in the light of observations made at schools. Apart from these, foreign language teachers were asked to share their opinions and experiences through interviews and questionnaires.

The results revealed that the main reasons stated by the teachers as for the problems of language teaching at primary schools were curricula, lack of materials, and

physical deficiencies of schools respectively. Other points in the data were not surprising in that they showed similarities with the ones obtained in related studies. Teachers and students were aware of the objectives of language education in general. Target competencies in all four skills could only be reached at 20% or 30%. Traditional techniques such as question-answer drills were still used and the students did not believe that they would be successful by using them. While the teachers found course programs intensive and the classes crowded, students did not think so.

All of the students gave importance to learning a new language, half of them suggested making the courses elective. Use of the language outside the classroom and motivation of students were found to be low. The number of teachers satisfied almost 40-50% of the demand and, especially, in the 4th and 5th grades there were no language teachers. The assessment and evaluation techniques were found to be insufficient while the necessary equipment and materials may not either be found at schools or may not be used. Some suggestions were given at the end of the study related to the problems.

Kayahan's study revealed useful data as it included both teachers' and students' opinions. Although teachers and students knew the objectives of English courses, they believed that they had some obstacles to reach those aims. These obstacles could be summarized as crowded classes, lack of various teaching techniques and methods, the quality of assessment and evaluation, the demand for more teachers. In order to see whether these problems are available in different schools, more examples will be given further on.

Ergüç (2004) inquired school administrators' and English teachers' opinions about the problems faced during foreign language instruction in grades four and five of primary schools. In order to reach his aim, the researcher used a Likert-type questionnaire to collect relevant data from school principals and English teachers at primary schools in urban Kırıkkale. The results revealed that school administrators and English teachers had similar opinions about foreign language instruction in primary schools. They thought that English courses should be taught by only the English teachers who were graduates of English Language Teaching departments. However,

53% of the administrators considered that English teachers were not capable of performing their tasks. All the participants shared the idea that English had a vital importance for students' future academic life and teaching English in the 4th and 5th grades was useful. They did not think that 2 hours of instruction per week was enough.

Ergüç's study was different from the other studies in that opinions of school principals were obtained about foreign language education. Administrators' ideas showed similarities with English teachers' opinions.

Some studies aimed to analyze students' beliefs and attitudes towards learning a foreign language in order to figure out what has been going on in the field. Cebeci (2006) carried out such a study by developing a scale called The Attitude Scale Towards English and applying it to the students of Vocational and Technical High Schools. 600 students in the tenth classes at Vocational and Technical High Schools in Inegöl were tested. The collected data have reflected that students' attitudes are higher than middle-level in terms of compulsory courses. Female students' attitudes levels are higher than their male peers. No significant difference has been found between the attitudes of students at Anatolian High School and the ones at other schools. Finally, higher attitudes have been observed at the vocational departments using English intensively. It can be concluded from this study that students show interest in learning English, especially when they feel the need for it.

Bağçeci and Yaşar (2007) have gathered students' opinions about English teaching at high schools in Gaziantep. Students were chosen randomly from grades one, two, and three from 26 schools. A questionnaire was developed by the researchers by using the information taken from the students through some open-ended questions in advance. The results have revealed that nearly half of the students believe language teaching is based on vocabulary and grammar, which they are not satisfied. More than half of the students believe that they should have the anxiety of getting good grades to be successful and they find no relationship between technological developments and knowing English. The methods used in English classes are assessed as insufficient and interest is not found to be the fundamental component of language learning. Students

mention that they do not like watching movies and reading materials in English and they do not desire to talk fluently and accurately. Lastly, they do not think that English will broaden their social environment.

Analyzing the elements bringing failure in foreign language teaching is the purpose of Günday's (2007) study. In his paper, he dealt with the current situation of foreign language teaching at state schools by getting 8 school administrators, 22 teachers, 395 primary school, 395 secondary school (Samsun) and 217 university (Ondokuz Mayıs University, Education Faculty, Departments of English, French, German and Primary School Teaching) students to fill out questionnaires. It is an extensive study in that the researcher included various participants with different roles in the system. The results have implied that using native language in language classes is not so effective inasmuch as students do not have the perfect competence in their mother tongues. Traditional methods are still made use of by the teachers and the lessons are based on course books without benefiting from technological implementations due to the lack of necessary equipment at schools. Crowded classes are one of the biggest problems much the same it is in other places in Turkey. Hence, it is difficult to conduct one-to-one interactions in classes. Qualifications of language teachers are questionable as it is possible to confront teachers from other disciplines owing to the lack of English teachers. Students with different proficiency levels have to take English courses in the same classes, which causes difficulties for teachers. Informing learners about the importance of learning a foreign language, its field of use, and the goals of the course and revising the implementations are the suggestions put forward by the researcher in the light of the results.

Gökçe (2008) is another researcher who has tried to examine the attitudes and motivational intensity of 10th grade students by conducting a comparative study. In this master's thesis study, the aim was to find out any difference between Anatolian high schools and high school department of vocational high schools in Bozüyük-Bilecik, also the presence of any gender difference in attitudes towards learning English, Anglo-Saxon culture, and motivational intensity. Quantitative data analysis results have clarified that learners at high school sections own more positive attitudes and more

motivational intensity than the ones at Anatolian high school sections. Female students have more positive attitudes and motivational intensity than males. Qualitative data analysis was used to evaluate open-ended questions and helped the researcher find out that half of the participants had negative attitudes towards trying to learn the target culture, and there was no sign of motivational intensity.

Yürük (2008), in her master's thesis "Elementary and Secondary School Students' Beliefs about Learning English as a Foreign Language in Turkey", had the goal of determining and observing Turkish students' beliefs about learning English. The research tool used was "Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory" (Horwitz 1987) consisted of 34 items on a Likert-scale type so as to reach 294 elementary and secondary school students in Çubuk, Ankara. When the results are gathered, students' beliefs reflect that students do not take English into consideration as a hard language to learn and they do not feel the need to study for many years to learn it. They have enough motivation to learn in general. Female students have stronger beliefs in terms of being better learner than their male peers. Practicing, guessing, repeating, and making mistakes are accepted as beneficial procedures by most of the students. Learners' beliefs clarify the condition of English teaching from students' perspective.

The following study by Pekgüç (2008) has been presented in this part as it has been conducted to identify various problems in foreign language education in both universities and primary, secondary, and high schools. The participants include 25 instructors and 25 students in preparatory classes from Marmara University and 25 instructors and 25 students in preparatory classes from Yeditepe University and 30 teachers working at private or state schools at different grades in primary, secondary, and high schools in 2006/2007 academic year. Content analysis was used to analyze the data gathered through interviews. As a summary, the results indicate that most students graduate from high schools with little knowledge of foreign language, they do not study regularly, and they prefer or tend to learn by memorizing. The students are not accustomed to reading in both Turkish and English by showing no interest in the target culture. Even though the students do not have the knowledge of the grammatical structures of their native language well, the teachers mainly teach grammar in teacher-

centered classes as they are forced to follow the intensive teaching program based on the curriculum. All in all, this study takes attention to most of the problems going on from perspective of both instructors and students at different levels and schools and shows that the situation in state or private schools does not differ much.

Yanık (2009) engaged in acquiring secondary school students' views on English courses. Open-ended questions were asked to both teachers and students all around Turkey in order to collect data. The participants are from the schools in The Marmara Region (Bursa, Balıkesir, Çanakkale), The Aegean Region (Denizli, Manisa, Afyon), The Mediterranean Region (Antalya, Isparta, Osmaniye), The Central Anatolia Region (Eskişehir, Nevşehir, Yozgat), The Eastern Anatolia Region (Elazığ, Erzurum, Ağrı), The Southeastern Anatolia Region (Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, Siirt), The Blacksea Region (Samsun, Trabzon, Giresun). Surprisingly, the results were different from the ones gathered in various research studies in that a positive picture was drawn. Most of the students had positive ideas about the courses since English has been accepted as being important; courses are believed to be enjoyable; students are successful and they love their teachers. Teachers have been reported to use interesting classroom activities and materials. Finally, teachers stated that students spend little time outside the classroom to develop their language skills despite their high motivation levels.

Akkuş (2009) carried out a study in secondary schools in Sivas by consulting 69 school administrators, 69 student parents, 65 English teachers, and 345 students through standardized open-ended interviews in order to determine the reasons for failure in English language teaching and detect the problems and solutions. The findings are not so surprising in that they are similar to the ones confronted in the studies conducted at tertiary level. English teaching is based on grammar and teachers are not qualified enough in terms of having the knowledge of various approaches and methods, the target culture, speaking abilities. Learning conditions are not very sufficient in that classes are crowded; there is not any technological equipment, materials (course books) are not efficient, physical conditions of the classrooms are not suitable for language learning, and current hours of instruction are not enough. When the results about students' approaches to learning English are examined, it can be seen that students are not

motivated enough as they have not acquired basic level of English previously (at secondary school), and the lack of questions on English in university entrance exams hinder them from showing interest in language classes.

One of the latest studies aimed to draw a picture of language teaching in Turkey is that of Akdoğan's (2010) conducted at Elazığ University, under the title "Teachers' and Instructors' Views about the Problems Experienced in Foreign Language Teaching in Turkey and Foreign Language Schools as a Proposal for Solution". A scale including Likert-type items and open-ended questions were given to 120 teachers and instructors at state and private institutions in Bursa, Balıkesir, Elazığ, and Mersin. The data have revealed that there are a lot of problems about English teaching. Those problems are insufficient methods and approaches (Grammar-Translation is the most common one although it is not sufficient alone.), start of language learning at late ages, lack of equipment and material, crowded classes because of the attendance requirement, students' inefficiency with their native language, inadequate instruction hours, exam-focused teaching, ignoring the development of four skills.

When all the studies given above are observed, it can be seen that they share common results no matter how many years have passed since the first one was conducted. The problems below are listed as a summary of what has been observed so far and inferred from the afore-mentioned studies:

- Both students and teachers do not think that foreign language education is successful in general terms.
- There is no awareness of specific goals and main objectives of the curriculum.
- Curricula are designed without making efficient needs analysis, therefore students and teachers have difficulties during learning/teaching process.
- Students and teachers do not believe that current implications in English language teaching are sufficient especially in terms of methodology, approach, techniques, and classroom environment.
- Although students find it essential to learn a foreign language, all the ongoing problems discourage them.

All in all, as time passed, there have not been any important improvements in the field. The problems are still continuing, perhaps with the ones added on each year. The following section will include some studies which seek for students' and teachers' opinions on various aspects of English teaching.

2.3. Specific Studies upon Language Teaching in Turkey

This section presents some studies which investigate some factors influential in students' performance in the English courses. The factors mentioned in those studies are foreign language anxiety, students' attitudes towards learning a foreign language and their cognitive readiness, the suitability of the learning environment. The following studies have been conducted either in the primary, secondary, high schools or universities.

2.3.1. Studies about students' views on foreign language

Öner and Gedikoğlu (2007) have written a paper about secondary school students' foreign language anxieties affecting their learning. The study was conducted to the 293 randomly selected students at preparatory classes in foreign language oriented high schools in central Gaziantep in 2004/2005 academic year. A Likert-type questionnaire was chosen as data collection instrument, including two parts. In the first part, personal information was collected, and students' foreign language anxieties were tried to be identified in the second part. The results have revealed that learners' anxieties influence their performances in English courses in that the grades of the students with high levels of anxiety are low, those of the ones with low levels of anxiety are high. Students' profile information has not been found to be effective in shaping students' anxieties. Students have shown that they do not hesitate to speak in the target language.

Another study related to foreign language anxieties of secondary school students was conducted by Doğan. During this research, the aim was to find out whether

students' parents' education and job, students' sex and type of school they are at present and graduated previously affect their anxiety levels. However, no relationship has been detected between these factors according to the data collected by the help of Likert-type foreign language anxiety questionnaires filled out by 293 students who were at the preparatory classes of foreign language medium private and state schools. The findings have confirmed that learners' whose grades are low have high level of anxiety whereas those whose grades are high have lower anxiety. Hence, it can be said that anxiety affects students' achievement. Students' anxiety levels mostly change according to the type of schools. Students have been found to have no hesitation to speak in English, and accordingly, they do not have any anxiety about answering questions as long as they get prepared in advance. The results show similarities when compared to the one mentioned above.

Aydın and Zengin (2008) have attempted to summarize studies about foreign language anxiety. They have come up with some subtitles which are the identification of anxiety, causes of anxiety, the effects of anxiety on foreign language learning, the ways to decrease anxiety and the studies in Turkey. Types of anxiety are identified as the fear of communication, exam anxiety, and the fear of being assessed negatively. The causes of anxiety are listed as learners' competence level, examinations, teacher behavior, and difficulty level of foreign language courses, language ability, and culture. It is learned that anxiety has positive and negative effects on learning, but it does not influence productive skills. Additionally, anxiety is found to be a variable hampering achievement and be influential in foreign language process. Studies have revealed that anxiety is a factor causing an increase in student mistakes. There are also some studies which focus on the ways to prevent or decrease anxiety and examine the relationship between achievement and anxiety, also deal with writing anxiety.

Apart from the studies dealing with learning anxiety, it is easy to find the ones aiming to observe other factors have a role in foreign language achievement. For instance, İnal, Evin, and Saracaloğlu (2005) investigated the relationship between learners' attitudes toward foreign language and foreign language achievement. Last-year-students in the high schools in Afşin and Elbistan, Kahramanmaraş were selected

as participants in that they were at the beginning of their career through college. Language attitude scales were applied, and the data were collected. In the light of findings, it has been reached that there is an important relation between learners' attitudes and success. On the other hand, no relation between achievement and gender has been found while female learners show more positive attitudes than their male peers.

The effect of cognitive readiness on the achievement foreign language classes has been investigated by Ünal and Özdemir (2008). 176 randomly chosen first-grade students at Kırşehir Faculty of Education took part in the study and they were applied pre-tests and post-tests. The researchers developed "The Scale of Readiness and Accomplishment Level of Students in Foreign Language" to collect relevant data. The results have indicated that learners' academic success and cognitive readiness vary according to the sex, which is in favor of female ones. The graduates of high schools with preparatory programs are more successful than the others. Finally, there is a significant relation between students' readiness of English service lessons and their foreign language achievement.

2.3.2. Studies about problems regarding method and class size

Sunel (1989) used the phrase "method problem" as he summarized some problems of method implementations in foreign language teaching. The researcher pointed out that accepting only one method and using it at all levels and for all objectives by ignoring the other methods was a crucial problem in Turkey at that time. The researcher's suggestion was to observe all the other methods and to select the ones which suit best to the specific learning environment, also to make use of the best parts of each method.

In his article, Kayapınar (2005) tried to get English language teachers' views on foreign language preparatory classes in terms of methods and techniques. A questionnaire prepared by the researcher was used to collect data from the teachers who worked at ten state high schools with English preparatory classes in Mersin city center.

The participants had been working as instructors of at least one foreign language preparatory class and had at least three years' experience. Their answers have shown that teachers make use of all the techniques in their classes, but the choice of methods is not made according to the needs of the teaching environment as methods and techniques are applied in the sequence of textbooks. This fact creates the gap between theory and practice.

Yılmaz (2008) has investigated the problem of language teaching in crowded classes at primary and secondary schools. The study was conducted in at six state schools in the center of Samsun in 2004-2005 academic year. A questionnaire including open-ended questions was given to 360 students to collect their opinions. The results have indicated that most of the students find it difficult to study in classrooms where there is no fresh air. They do not believe that they have the chance to interact with their teachers easily. However, there are some positive answers. For instance, 12% of the students think that crowded classes create a competitive atmosphere and they feel safe and relaxed there. Also, there are some students who state that they can make a lot of friends, which makes them happy.

The studies summarized in this section reveal that students in Turkey confront some difficulties in learning English in the courses they take in primary school, secondary school, high school, and university. It is clear to see that the difficulties mostly stem from the factors external to the students such as the use of inefficient methods, crowded classes, and etc. There are also some factors which are internal to the students such as language learning anxiety and lack of motivation. Additionally, some suggestions have been made in the light of the results of all studies in order to create a better learning environment in the English courses.

CHAPTER III

3. Method

In this chapter, the general design of the study is discussed. Research model, detailed information about the participants, data collection instrument, data collection, and data analysis procedures are given in this chapter.

3.1. Research Design

This study aims to gather vocational college students' opinions about compulsory English courses. The selected research design for the study is qualitative. Qualitative research design would satisfy the researcher and the reader with rich and detailed data compulsory for understanding the underlying factors present in a case. Therefore, qualitative approach was preferred in this study in order to collect data about the participants' real- life experiences because qualitative research provides the researcher the ways to find out and define social phenomena “from the inside”, and one of these ways is by analyzing experiences of individuals or groups that have connections with every day or professional practices (Flick, 2007).

In this qualitative research study, the first aim is to identify the characteristics of vocational college students in terms of their academic performance in the English courses. Document analysis, which is one of the methods used in qualitative research to examine and interpret data (Bowen, 2009), was used to find out the grades participant students had in the English classes in the first term of college, and those grades were used to classify students in terms of their academic performance in the compulsory English course tests.

The second purpose of this study is to gather students' opinions to determine the contribution of the English courses to their future professional and daily lives, usefulness of the English courses in their schools, and necessity of the English courses in their schools because one of the most commonly debated issues is that English learning in vocational colleges does not take place even though instructors and students meet regularly and follow a curriculum. This study was initiated to understand the reasons that lie beneath this fact. In order to understand these underlying reasons, students' opinions were obtained using semi-structured interviews which is a qualitative technique that allows the researcher to seek answers to the questions he investigates and allows the participants to add whatever they find necessary in addition to answering the researcher's questions.

3.2. Sampling

In a qualitative research study, sampling may be seen as an ambiguity in a researcher's mind as there are not set-out rules for determining how many participants to include as Patton (2002) stated:

“There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244).

Creswell (2012) mentions that the sample size may change from one qualitative study to another and suggests some guidelines. One of them is that it is common to study a few individuals or cases in order not to lose the opportunity of conducting in-depth research as he reports in his following explanation:

“In some cases, you might study a single individual or a single site. In other cases, the number may be several, ranging from 1 or 2 to 30 or 40. Because of the need to report details about each individual or site, the larger number of cases can become unwieldy and result in superficial perspectives. Moreover,

collecting qualitative data and analyzing it takes considerable time, and the addition of each individual or site only lengthens that time” (p. 209).

A similar explanation about the sample size was made by Patton (2012), “Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (N=1) selected *purposefully*” (p.230). It can be concluded that the best decision while determining sample size is to keep the sample size small so that it will be possible to conduct an in-depth research and to present a meaningful amount of details. However, there is still need to specify an acceptable number of participants because it is hard to decide how many participants will provide the researcher with rich data. Saturation is the term used to explain the issue as Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) point out in their following statements:

“When planning data collection for a qualitative research study, whether for a Ph.D. dissertation or a new business model, researchers often ask how many participants are enough? The answer is, enough is the amount where additional participants don’t provide any additional insights. We call this phenomenon “saturation.” You reach saturation when you are no longer learning very much (if anything) from each subsequent interview, observation, etc.” (p. 24).

When the data collected from different individuals repeats itself, and thus overlaps, that marks the end of sampling and data collection. Determining the sample size can be started with the question of defining how many participants a researcher should study with to reach the saturation mentioned above. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) propose that:

“Saturation often occurs around 12 participants in homogeneous groups. This is consistent with my own experience during a recent CEO study where saturation occurred around 11 participants (Latham, 2013). To ensure that you have saturation you have to go beyond the point of saturation to make sure no new major concepts emerge in the next few interviews or observations. Consequently, 15 as a minimum for most qualitative interview studies works very well when the participants are homogeneous” (p. 24).

The determination of the sample size is followed by the questions: “whom the interviews should be done with” and “what criteria should be taken into consideration for forming the sample”. The sampling strategy that is relevant to the purposes of this qualitative research is “purposeful sampling.” According to Patton (1990), the selection of the participants is directly in relation to the researcher’s intention and the standard is whether the informants are information-rich or not (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, a researcher selects certain people who have some common characteristics. As Creswell (2012) mentions:

“You might select certain sites or people because they possess a similar trait or characteristic. In homogeneous sampling, the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics. To use this procedure, you need to identify the characteristics and find individuals or sites that possess it. For example, in a rural community, all parents who have children in school participate in a parent program. You choose members of this parent program to study because they belong to a common subgroup in the community” (p.208).

In this study, by using the purposeful sampling strategy, the researcher formed a homogenous sample group in order to collect data within a specific group who had defining characteristics. In accord with the suggestions made about the number of participants in the sample in a homogenous group, the researchers initially decided to include minimum twelve participants in the sample as Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) proposed twelve as the number where a researcher may reach saturation. Voluntary participation was encouraged in that the data would be more honest, and the participants would present their opinions more willingly which would serve for richer data as well. Therefore, in this study there were sixteen participant students in total and all of them were first-year students; eight of them were in the department of EC, and eight students were in the department of SS. We asked for voluntary participation from the students. Of the total of 105 students in two departments (64 in SS and 75 in EC), sixteen students participate voluntarily in the study. This is also 25% more than Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) recommended.

3.3. Participants

Students in this study were all first-year students in two different departments of Düzce Vocational College of Düzce University. There were 16 students and they were attending the EC department and the SS department. In order to protect the identity of the participants, the students in both groups were coded using the initials of their departments followed by numbers 1-8. The students in the EC department were coded as EC1, EC2, EC3, EC4, EC5, EC6, EC7, and EC8. The same was done for the students in the SS group and they were coded as SS1, SS2, SS3, SS4, SS5, SS6, SS7, and SS8. The students in each department were further classified in terms of their academic performance in the English courses they took in the first of vocational college so that the obtained results would yield richer data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at different times with the EC and SS students to seek their opinions and experiences about the issues that formed the scope of this research. The following tables present some background information about the participants.

Table 3.1. Profile information of the students in the EC group

Participants	Gender	The type of high school the student graduated from	First term English course grade
EC1	Male	Industrial Vocational High School	BB
EC2	Male	Anatolian Vocational High School	BA
EC3	Male	Industrial Vocational High School	CB
EC4	Female	Anatolian Technical and Industrial Vocational High School	DD
EC5	Female	Anatolian Technical and Industrial Vocational High School	CC
EC6	Female	Anatolian Technical and Industrial Vocational High School	FF
EC7	Male	Industrial Vocational High School	BB
EC8	Male	Industrial Vocational High School	DC

Table 3.2. Profile information of the students in the SS group

Participants	Gender	The type of high school the student graduated from	First term English course grade
SS1	Male	Anatolian Trade Vocational High School	BA
SS2	Male	Trade Vocational High School	DD
SS3	Female	Anatolian Trade Vocational High School	FF
SS4	Female	Technical High School	DC
SS5	Female	Regular High School	BB
SS6	Female	Trade Vocational High School	CB
SS7	Male	Multi Program High School	CC
SS8	Male	Trade Vocational High School	AA

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

In-depth studies do not limit the respondents' responses to choices given by the researcher. Such studies are conducted to understand what is actually happening from the perspectives of people who experience the issue at hand. As the aim of a qualitative study is to explore what certain people think about some specific issue/s, one of the most suitable tools for collecting opinions is an interview. There are different types of interviews such as one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, telephone interviews, and e-mail interviews (Creswell, 2012). Different scholars give different descriptions of the types of the interviews. Hatch (2002), for example, proposes the following taxonomy of formal interviews for researchers who seek answers to the questions they have in mind:

“Formal interviews are sometimes called “structured,” “semi-structured,” or “in-depth” interviews. They are structured in the sense that the researcher is “in charge” of leading the interview, there is a set time established for the interview, and they are most often recorded on tape. They are semi-structured because,

although researchers come to the interview with guiding questions, they are open to following the leads of informants and probing into areas that arise during the interview interactions. They are in-depth in that they are designed to go deeply into the understandings of the informants. Formal interviews are also used when interviewing is the only data collection tool of a study” (p. 94).

The definition of Hatch (2002) makes it clear that when a researcher or interviewer has some questions prepared in advance and is ready to ask more questions to acquire related data, the type of the interview is semi-structured. In other words, a semi-structured interview gives an interviewer the opportunity to get some new ideas or direct the ongoing interview to reach new opinions while the interviewees are answering the questions at hand. McCammon (2017) in his description makes similar points as to the nature of semi-structured interviews:

“Semi-structured interviews are used to gather focused, qualitative textual data. This method offers a balance between the flexibility of an open-ended interview and the focus of a structured ethnographic survey. This method can also uncover rich descriptive data on the personal experiences of participants.”

In this study, the primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, and they were used to capture participant students’ opinions about the issues related to English teaching in vocational colleges. The interview questions were formulated to seek answers to the research questions of the study. The questions were asked in Turkish so that students did not have any problems in stating what they had in mind, and they were all open-ended:

1. *“What are the characteristics of successful, average, and weak students’ in the vocational college in terms of their performance in English classes?”*
2. *“Do you think the English courses you take during your college education will contribute to your professional and daily life in the future? How?”*
3. *“Do you find the English courses in your college useful? In what respects are they useful? Why?”*

4. *“Do you think the English courses in your department are necessary? Do you think these courses should be removed from your curriculum? Why or why not?”*

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

As it was mentioned earlier in this chapter, participant students were classified into three groups as successful, average, and weak in terms of their performance in the tests administered in the English courses of the first term in vocational college. Document analysis was used to obtain the students' grade point averages in those English courses so that the classification could be done. Students were given a form in which they wrote some information about their profiles, for instance; their names, surnames, age, gender, the type of high school they graduated from, and the grade they had in the compulsory English course in the first term. The information collected through forms were used to categorize the students into groups.

Following the organization of the groups, the date when the interviews would be conducted was determined and the students who stated their consent to participate in the study were informed and called for the first appointment. As Creswell (2012) suggested, on the interview days, the equipment for recording was prepared in advance and was controlled if it was working properly or not. The interviewer (the researcher, herself) started the interviews with some icebreakers, and wanted answers for each question one by one. Great attention was paid in order not to interrupt the students' talking and to give their opinions, and no comment was made upon the opinions expressed by the students. When the interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed and analyzed.

3.6. Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2012), in qualitative research, data analysis begins with studying the data to get the general sense. A researcher needs to explore the data in order to understand its organization and decide whether more information is needed or not. The next step is the coding of the data. As Creswell states

“Coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in data. The object of the coding process is to make sense out of text data, divide it into text or image segments, label the segments with codes, examine codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse these codes into broad themes. Thus, this is an inductive process of narrowing data into a few themes” (p. 243).

There are some steps in the coding of the data as well. There may not be a certain procedure to follow, but Creswell (2012, pp. 244-245) quotes Tesch (1990) and Creswell (2007) who suggested a six-step process for the coding of the data which includes reading the transcriptions and taking notes, discovering the underlying meaning, coding, listing the codes and reducing them, looking for new codes, and finally finding themes:

“Themes (also called categories) are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database. Identify the five to seven themes by examining codes that the participants discuss most frequently, are unique or surprising, have the most evidence to support them, or are those you might expect to find when studying the phenomenon. The reason for the small number of themes is that it is best to write a qualitative report providing detailed information about a few themes rather than general information about many themes” (p. 245).

All the steps mentioned above were followed in the data analysis of this qualitative study. After the gist of the data was obtained, the coding process was conducted, and the codes were grouped in order to reach the themes (categories). The tables were used in the presentation of the findings in order to give the codes and the themes.

3.6.1 Validity

Creswell (2012) points out that it is important to assure that findings and interpretations should be accurate, and he states “validating findings means that the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings through strategies such as member checking or triangulation. Several qualitative researchers have addressed the idea of triangulation (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985)” (p. 259).

As the researcher’s interpretation exists in the analysis of the data, it is highly significant to assure the accuracy and credibility of the findings. Creswell (2012) describes three forms of strategies used to validate qualitative accounts, which are triangulation, member checking, and auditing. In this study triangulation and auditing were used for validity. According to Creswell (2012)

“Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. The inquirer examines each information source and finds evidence to support a theme. This ensures that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, or processes. In this way, it encourages the researcher to develop a report that is both accurate and credible” (p. 259).

About auditing, Creswell (2012) mentions that a person outside the project is asked to make a review of the study and make interpretations about the good points and poor points of the study as he remarks “This is the process of conducting an external audit, in which a researcher hires or obtains the services of an individual outside the study to review different aspects of the research. The auditor reviews the project and writes or communicates an evaluation of the study” (p. 260).

Patton (2002) mentions Denzin (1978) who makes a significant contribution to our understanding of triangulation by identifying four types of triangulation, which are data triangulation (using different data sources), investigator triangulation (involving different researchers and evaluators), theory triangulation (different perspectives to

analyze a single set of data), and methodological triangulation (using a variety of methods).

In this study, the participants were chosen from two vocational colleges and two main groups were formed by this way. The students were also categorized into three subgroups as successful, average, and weak. Data triangulation was used by collecting data from different individuals as the students were categorized into successful, average, and weak groups, and the participants groups were from two different departments (EC and SS). Additionally, another type of triangulation, which is investigator triangulation (Denzin, 1978) or auditing in Creswell's (2012) words, was used as a Ph.D. holder person who expertise in qualitative research was asked to read, check, and report on the findings. Therefore, the accuracy of the findings was validated.

CHAPTER IV

4. Findings and Discussion of the Results

This chapter consists of four sections which will present the analyses of the data regarding the four research questions formulated at the outset of the study. Firstly, the results of the data analysis regarding the first research question will be presented. The purpose of the first research question was to identify the characteristics of vocational college students in terms of their performance in the compulsory English course. This was important because it would show how students would perceive the issues that this study aimed to investigate. The following three sections will present the participating students' opinions to the other three research questions formulated, using their group classifications as the criterion.

4.1. Findings of Data Analysis Regarding the First Research Question

This section presents the analysis of the data gathered from three different sources in order to classify students in terms of their performance in the compulsory English course as successful, average, and weak. The criteria and the types of data used to that end are the participating students' course grades in the vocational college compulsory English course, the students' own descriptions of successful, average, and weak students in the English course in vocational school, and the type of high school students graduated from to determine whether the type of high school students graduated from contributes in any way to students' performance in the vocational college English course. These criteria are discussed in the subsections that follow below.

4.1.1. The criteria used in the establishment of student groups

The first research question in this study was, “*What are the characteristics of successful, average, and weak students in vocational colleges in terms of their performance in English classes?*” Three criteria were used to answer this question to establish the profiles of students. As was mentioned above, the criteria used to that end were: participating students’ grade point averages (GPA) in the English exams in the vocational college they attended at the time of data collection, the students’ personal descriptions of the successful, average, and weak students which were obtained through their answers to the interview question 1, which is “How do the students at vocational colleges define the characteristics of successful, average, and weak students’ in terms of their English achievement?”, and the type of high school students graduated from - to be informed of their English learning background and to assess whether their previous English learning background would have any effect on their current performance in English classes in the vocational college. The purpose for drawing information from these three sources is to establish accurate and reliable profiles of student performance in English by examining their grades, high school diplomas, and their personal descriptions and to strengthen the accuracy of the findings, using data triangulation.

4.1.2. First criterion – students’ GPA

The first criterion used in establishing the profiles of the participating students was their English course GPAs in the university this study was conducted. GPA was taken as the guiding criterion in establishing student groups because judgments about students in any course are made on the basis of their performance which is expressed in numerical terms. Thus, student GPAs were used initially in this research. Student achievement in the participating students’ university was measured on a scale of 0-100% which is also divided into letter grades, ranging from FF to AA. The passing grade was 50% which referred to the letter grade DD. Using the grading scale of the university, the students were divided into the successful, average, and weak groups based on their GPAs in the English course: students who scored 80-100% on the course were placed into the successful student category; letter grades in the successful category

were AA, BA, and BB. Students whose GPA ranged between 50-79% were placed in the average category; letter grades in the average category were CB, CD, DC, and DD. Students who scored 49% or less in their English course were placed in the weak category; FD and FF were the letter grades in this category. Following this classification, the participating students were placed into the established categories: Of the 16 students, 6 were successful (37.5%), 8 were average (50%), and 2 (12.5%) were weak. Table 4.1 presents the numerical representation of student achievement in terms of their GPAs in the English course by giving the numbers of students (N) and their percentages (%).

Table 4.1. Student achievement in the English course

Student achievement	N	%
Successful	6	37,5%
Average	8	50%
Weak	2	12,5%

Table 4.1 shows that the cumulation is on the average band with 8 students - 50% of the participants. This initial finding shows that in terms of English performance, the *average* would be the term that defined overall student achievement in the compulsory vocational college English course. The placement of the participating students into these three categories was based on their performance in the English exams they took. At this point, it is necessary to discuss the content of the English exams to understand what they measure.

4.1.2.1. The content of the English exams in vocational colleges

The content of the exams students take primarily determines student achievement in terms of GPA. English exams in Turkey generally use multiple choice items and measure student knowledge in three areas: grammar, vocabulary, and reading. The majority of the students in the country are familiar with this format and content, and the students in this study were no exception. The following examples are from the

exams the participating students took in the English course in their university: Two examples will be given for each area.

Grammar items:

Item 1. *This is my brother. _____ name is John.*

- a. His b. Her c. Its d. Your*

Item 2. *_____ the window. It's cold.*

- a. Closing b. Not closing c. Close d. Not close*

Vocabulary items:

Item 1. *Your mother's father is your _____.*

- a. husband b. grandfather c. grandmother d. uncle*

Item 2. *Small is the opposite of _____.*

- a. happy b. big c. sad d. tiny*

Reading items:

The reading section includes a paragraph and related True or False items and paragraph completion items. One example is given for each.

Item 1. *Susan White is a teacher at university. She teaches English. She is from Canada and she is married. Her husband's name is John, and they have two children. Their names are Jack and Lucy. Susan likes cooking. She always does exercise and goes shopping with Jack and Lucy at the weekends. They are a happy family.*

- *Susan is a Math teacher.* T F
- *John is her son.* T F
- *Susan cooks.* T F

Item 2. *Alice: Hello, I'm Alice Peterson.*

Lucy: _____

Alice: Yes, it's P-E-T-E-R-S-O-N.

a. What's your family name?

b. Can you spell your last name?

b. What's your e-mail address?

d. Is this your friend?

A quick glance at these test items would indicate clearly that students' classification into the successful, average, and weak categories were done solely on the basis of their performance in those three areas. Therefore, productive skills speaking and writing and the receptive skill listening are not included in the assessment.

4.1.3. Second criterion – participating students' opinions on defining English achievement

The second component in creating the profiles of “successful”, “average”, and “weak” students was the participating students' answers to the interview question, “*According to you, what are the characteristics of successful, average, and weak students' in terms of their English achievement?*”, which was the first research question to be directed at the students. The students were not told that they belonged to different groups previously established by the researcher. They were interviewed individually, and their opinions were obtained through these individual interviews. In these interviews, students in those three groups individually defined the characteristics of successful, average, and weak students. To that end, firstly, the definitions made by the students in the successful, average, and weak student groups will be presented in sub-sections. Points made by more than one person will be given first to convey the general perception/s in each group. Following these general defining statements, taking advantage of qualitative research methods' richness of collected data, individual students' statements that may help, contribute, strengthen the common points or point out some significant issue will be presented as well. In this order, each group's definitions of student performance will be given first. Each sub-section will be followed by a table that visually summarizes the similarities and differences among the groups' definitions of a “successful”, “average”, and “weak” student.

4.1.3.1. Successful students' definitions of a "successful" student

Firstly, successful students' statements to define the characteristics of a "successful" student in terms of English achievement will be given. According to these students, a "successful" student is the one who:

- is able to speak English. (SS1, EC1, EC2, EC7) (66,7%)
- has the desire to learn English. (EC2, SS5) (33,4%)
- has the opportunity to learn English. (SS5) (16,7%)

As seen in the statements above, the common points participating successful students made while defining the characteristics of a "successful" student were that a "successful" student could speak English, was motivated to learn English, and had the opportunity to learn English. What follows are the statements made by the students regarding those points in the order given above:

"A successful student is able to communicate with a foreigner." SS1

"A successful student speaks English and has the desire to succeed." EC2

"A successful student has the opportunity to learn English. Sometimes his family sends him to a good private school to learn English when he is very young."
SS5

As these statements indicate, speaking appears to be the most important criterion as it was mentioned by four students (66,7%) in the successful group. It is necessary to point out that these common definitions are not the characteristics of the students in the successful group. Rather, they are the students' definitions of an ideal successful learner of English. None of the successful students in this study stated that they possessed the ability to speak English fluently; these students were aware of the fact that English teaching in schools did not focus on speaking, the exams they took did not test all language skills, and getting a high grade on an English exam did not indicate at all that a "successful" student could speak English as the student SS8 stated:

"Students cannot be successful by learning English at school or college, and

one should get the chance to interact by using English at an early age. Also, a 'successful' student may have good grades in English courses, but this does not mean that he is really a 'successful' communicator."

It is essential to mention that this opinion was commonly agreed upon by each and every student in all three groups when asked individually by the researcher later. It is interesting to note that even the students who the system classified as "successful" were aware that they did not possess the ability to communicate. This means that, in the eyes of these students, a "successful" student in Turkey is the one who scores a satisfactory grade on a paper test, yet is unable to communicate fluently.

One point made by the average and weak students while defining successful students was successful students' ability of doing translations in the course. Upon this finding, when the successful students were individually asked later why they did not mention this characteristic while defining a "successful" student, they stated that doing translation was an activity they frequently did in English classes, and that a successful student could translate a text he read.

4.1.3.2. Average students' definitions of a "successful" student

In this subsection, participating average students' definitions of a "successful" student will be given. According to average students, a "successful" student is the one who:

- is able to speak English. (EC5, SS2, SS4, SS7) (62,5%)
- has the desire and interest to learn English. (EC5, SS4) (25%)
- has the opportunity to learn English (EC3, SS4) (25%)
- can make translations. (EC8) (12,5%)

The points above show that average students' defining statements of a "successful" student were identical to those of the successful students in three points and two of them were being able to speak English and having the desire and interest to learn English. One student, EC5, makes the first point in his own words as follows:

“A successful student does not have many problems in speaking.”

As for the second point, one student, SS4, made the following statement:

“A successful student has the desire and interest to learn English.”

The average student group also shared the opinion that in order to be successful, a student had to have an opportunity to learn English, but the group defined “opportunity” as living in a country where English was spoken as EC3 stated:

“A student cannot speak English well and fluently even if he is successful because a learner can speak English only if he has the chance to live abroad.”

Another point emerged in the average group was that a successful student could make translations of the texts they studied in the class:

“A successful student can make translations.” EC8

4.1.3.3. Weak students’ definitions of a “successful” student

Weak students’ definitions of the characteristics of successful students show that a “successful” student is the one who:

- is able to speak English. (EC6, SS3) (100%)
- has the desire and opportunity to learn English. (SS3) (50%)
- can make translations. (EC6) (50%)

The first point weak students made about the characteristics of a successful student was the productive skill of speaking just like the students in the successful and average groups. Student EC6 stated:

“A successful student is able to speak English.”

Students in the successful and average category put forward the idea that a successful learner has the desire and the opportunities to learn English. This opinion was expressed in the weak group as well.

The students in this group defined “opportunity” slightly differently from the other groups; according to weak students, a learner might be successful if he had the opportunity to use English outside the classroom for his professional purposes; one student - SS3, made the following statement on the issue:

“A successful student may have the chance to practice English by working in the tourism sector so that he can speak English.”

In addition to those two points, the students in the weak group added that a “successful” student could make translations as EC6 expressed in her following words:

“A successful student can make translations.”

The skill of making translation was used as a criterion by the participants in the student groups as teachers use translation in their classes to teach the meaning of vocabulary and grammar items. Teachers also ask students to make translations of entire texts sentence by sentence while doing reading in order to help them comprehend the ideas in the text and become ready to do the follow-up exercises. As the translation of the sentences are mostly made by the ‘good’ students in the class, the participating students in the “weak” group may have formed the opinion that one of the characteristics of a successful student is to make translations as it is one of the most commonly used techniques in English classes in their college.

As seen in the above statements made by the students in all groups, it can be concluded that students shared similar opinions about the characteristics of a “successful” student: the students in all groups mentioned the ability to speak English as their first defining characteristic of a successful learner – an ability they all lacked. The students also pointed out that it was not possible to learn to speak English in a state school, and that a successful student needed an opportunity to learn English by using personal financial means either by going to a good private school, by living abroad, or by working in a field where English was commonly used. Getting high grades on English exams was not an indicator that a student was successful because the students all agreed that the English exams they took did not test the speaking skill at all. Table 4.2 presents a summary of the participating successful, average, and weak students’

opinions about the characteristics of a “successful” student in terms of English achievement.

Table 3.2. Characteristics of a “successful” student by all groups

	Successful Ss	Average Ss	Weak Ss
is able to speak English	✓	✓	✓
have the desire to learn English	✓	✓	✓
have the opportunity to learn English	✓	✓	✓
can make translations of an entire text	✓	✓	✓

4.1.3.4. Successful students’ definitions of an “average” student

Following the definitions of a “successful” student, the groups’ opinions of the characteristics of an “average” student will be presented next. Firstly, the successful students’ opinions about the characteristics of average students will be presented. According to successful students, an average student is the one who:

- is able to speak English, but not as well as a successful student. (SS1, EC2, EC7) (50%)
- understands what he hears or reads, but has difficulties responding. (SS5, SS8) (33,4%)
- can translate sentences into Turkish to comprehend the meaning of a written text. (EC1, EC2, EC7) (50%)

While defining the characteristics of an “average” student, successful students used the skill of speaking as a criterion as they did the same when they defined successful students. Yet, they mentioned lack of ease of use for average students. For instance, EC2 stated:

“An average student can speak English, but not perfectly. First, he makes the sentence in Turkish in his mind, and then he tries to translate it while speaking. At the same time, he thinks about which tense or grammar rule to use.”

Another point about the characteristics of average learners stated by the students in the successful group was that average students had difficulties in giving a reply to what they hear or read in English. Difficulty was included in the definitions, and comprehension appeared as an important criterion - something successful students did not mention while defining the characteristics of successful students. To illustrate this point, the statement of student SS8 is presented:

“An average student can understand but cannot tell accurately what he wants to say.”

The last point about average students in the successful group was translating sentences into Turkish. According to successful students, an average student can translate English sentences, but he may make some mistakes while translating. Statements of student EC1 and EC2 are given to illustrate that point:

“An average student can make translations but makes a few mistakes.” EC1

“An average student makes translations in order to understand. He cannot understand all sentences immediately.” EC2

4.1.3.5. Average students' definitions of an “average” student

Participating average students' perceptions of an average student's characteristics will be listed next. From their point of view, an “average” student is the one who:

- is able to speak English, but with difficulty. (EC3, EC5, EC8, SS4) (50%)
- understands what he hears, but has difficulty responding. (SS6, SS7) (25%)
- can make translations, but not as well as a successful learner does. (EC3, EC5, EC8) (37,5%)

The definitions of average students were not different from the definitions made by successful students. Firstly, four of the average students (50%) mentioned the ability

to speak English as their most important criterion. One of those students, SS4, makes that point in his own words as follows:

“An average student speaks English but has problems.”

According to average students, an “average” student can do few things while speaking such as using memorized sentences or phrases. For instance, student SS4 stated:

“An average student can talk about things like his age, where he is from, and how old he is.”

This example illustrates that an average student can use his speaking skill to do some activities in English, using memorized sentences or phrases.

The second point average students stated about the characteristics of an “average” student was that average students have difficulties in responding to what they hear. Like the successful group, the average group recognized the importance of comprehension. To illustrate that point, student SS7 remarked:

“An average student understands what he hears but cannot comfortably tell what he wants to say.”

The final point made by average group was making translations. As it was seen in the successful group, average group thought that an average student could make translations, but they could not make it as well as a successful student could. Statement made by student EC8 is given to illustrate that point:

“An average student cannot make translations as well as a successful student does.”

4.1.3.6. Weak students’ definitions of an “average” student

Weak students in this study made the definitions of a student at average level in terms of English performance. According to them, an “average” student is the one who:

- is able to speak English but with problems. (EC6, SS3) (100%)

- can translate a paragraph. (EC6) (50%)

Weak students used the same points which were the skills of speaking and making translations to define the characteristics of average students:

“An average student tries to speak in English but with problems. He somehow finds a way to interact.” SS3

“An average student cannot speak English perfectly, but he can speak. He can translate a paragraph.” EC6

As a summary of the presentation of the characteristics of average students for each group, it can be seen that participating successful, average, and weak students have met at some common points to define average students and what they can do with the language skills they have. Table 4.3 is given to summarize the characteristics of average students in terms of English achievement.

Table 4.3. Characteristics of an “average” student by all groups

	Successful Ss	Average Ss	Weak Ss
is able to speak English but with problems	✓	✓	✓
can make translations despite some difficulties	✓	✓	✓
understands but has difficulties in responding	✓	✓	

4.1.3.7. Successful students’ definitions of a “weak” student

Lastly, the participating students were asked to define the characteristics of a “weak” student in terms of English knowledge and ability. Firstly, successful students’ opinions will be presented. According to successful students, a “weak” student is the one who:

- is weak in terms of overall English proficiency. (SS8, EC1, EC7) (50%)
- can translate only one or two sentences in a paragraph. (EC1, EC2) (33,4%)

- has limited vocabulary knowledge. (SS5, EC2) (33,4%)

The first point made by the successful group was that weak students' knowledge of English was very limited in all areas of language. Students EC7 and SS8 made the following statements on the issue:

"They're at the most basic level." EC7

"Their English does not help them survive in any way." SS8

Regarding the statements of successful students, it can be seen that the skill of making translation was used as the second defining characteristic. However, when compared with the definitions of a "successful" and "average" student, there is a limitation in the definition; the successful group stated that a "weak" student could translate only a few sentences in a reading text or an exercise in the class, but not an entire reading text. As student EC2 remarked:

"A weak student can translate only one or two sentences in a paragraph on his own."

The third point the successful group mentioned about the characteristics of a weak student was the vocabulary knowledge. At this point, successful students referred to another limitation. They pointed out that a "weak" student knew a limited number of words. As student EC2 stated:

"A weak student knows very few words."

4.1.3.8. Average students' definitions of a "weak" student

From the participating average students' point of view, a "weak" student is the one who:

- is not able to speak and write in English. (EC3, EC5, EC8, SS2, SS6) (62,5%)
- may only use some memorized phrases or simple structures. (EC3, EC4, EC5, SS4, SS7) (62,5%)

Regarding the definition of a “weak” student by the average group, the first point mentioned was about the productive skills of speaking and writing. When the participants described the characteristics of successful and average students, they did not mention the writing skill before; they all referred to the speaking skill, though. This is the first time the productive skill of writing is mentioned by the students. Student SS6 makes the following statement to illustrate the point:

“A weak student is not able to speak and write in English as he has little knowledge of English.”

This shows that all of the productive skills are missing in weak students. Writing was not mentioned as a skill that students did not have until the weak group. Successful and average students experienced varying degrees of difficulty in speaking, but when it came to writing, nobody voiced a concern over the lack of it in the previous two groups. The current statements show that writing appears as a major problem in addition to speaking in the weak group as writing in class that is expected of students does not require them to express their ideas in a detailed manner in a lengthy text. The classroom writing requires mainly writing answers to questions and exercises in the book. It appears that weak students do not have this ability.

Regarding the definition of a “weak” student by the average group, the second point mentioned was the use of memorized phrases and simple structures in speaking. Participating average students thought that a “weak” student could introduce his *name/age/country* and use *imperatives* like “*Come/Go/Sit down/Stand up*”. The statements by two students illustrate the point:

“A weak student can only talk about his name or age with his limited vocabulary knowledge.” EC3

“A weak student can utter simple phrases by using imperatives like Come/Go/Sit down/Stand up.” SS7

4.1.3.9. Weak students' definitions of a “weak” student

Finally, participating' weak students described the characteristics of weak students in terms of English knowledge and ability. According to them, a “weak” student is the one who:

- is not able to speak English. (EC6) (50%)
- does not have any interest in learning English. (SS3) (50%)
- does not even participate in the activities in English classes. (EC6) (50%)

Regarding the definition of a “weak” student by the weak group, the productive skill of speaking was used as the first point to describe the characteristics as EC6 stated:

“A weak student cannot speak English at all.”

The second point mentioned by the weak students was that a weak student is not motivated to learn English, and he is not willing to participate in class activities. Teacher does grammar, vocabulary, reading activities mostly, and weak students do not participate even in those activities. EC6 and SS3 remarked:

“A weak student sleeps during the lessons.” EC6

“A weak student does not have any interest or attempts to use English.” SS3

The statements made by the three groups varied while defining the characteristics of weak students whereas they nearly used similar statements in the descriptions of successful and average students. Table 4.4 shows a summary of the participating students' definitions of the characteristics of the weak students.

Table 4.4. Characteristics of a “weak” student by all groups

	Successful Ss	Average Ss	Weak Ss
can speak in memorized phrases and sentences		✓	
can translate one or two sentences in a paragraph	✓		
cannot write in English		✓	
cannot speak in English		✓	✓
do not have any interest or attempts to use English			✓
do not participate in the activities in English classes			✓

The first criterion formulated at the beginning of this study was the participating students' GPAs in the English courses they had taken in the first term of college, and it was found out that the term defining the vocational college students' success level was “*average*”. The second criterion was the participating students' high school type they had graduated from, and in this study high school type was found out not to be an effective factor in student success or performance in English courses they took in vocational college as there was a graduate of ATVHS in the weak group, and the leading students in the successful and average group were the graduates of TVHS and IVHS. Finally, participating students' own descriptions of the characteristics of successful, average, and weak students showed a coherence within group and across group definitions. As was mentioned earlier in this section, English exams did not test all language skills especially productive skills of speaking and writing, so labeling a student as successful according to these test scores might not be an indicator of the fact that the student was able to use English successfully. Participating students stated the same opinion, and they mentioned that even if they were successful or average according to their GPAs, they were weak as they were not able to use English productively, and they had difficulties telling what they had in mind.

Three of the research questions formulated at the outset of this study aimed to capture the participating students' opinions about learning English based on their experiences in the vocational college they were currently attending. Each of those

questions consisted of subquestions, and they were formulated to be used during the interviews.

4.1.4. Third criterion – students' previous English education

The third criterion used in the attempt to establish the characteristics of these student groups was the participating students' previous English education. The findings of the document analysis showed that the students in this study were graduates of 7 different high school types, which were: Anatolian Trade Vocational High School (ATVHS), Anatolian Vocational High School (AVHS), Trade Vocational High School (TVHS), Industrial Vocational High School (IVHS), Regular High School (RHS), Multi-Program High School (MPHS), and Technical High School (THS). In reporting, in addition to students' GPAs, these school types will be given by using two other symbols, namely, number (N) and percentage (%).

In each one of the three tables below, the types of high schools successful, average, and weak students graduated from will be presented. Firstly, the type of high school successful students graduated from will be given in Table 4.5. As was mentioned, there were 6 students in the successful category.

Table 4.5. Types of high school successful students graduated from

HS Types	N of Ss	% of HS type	GPA Letter Grade
TVHS	1	16,6	AA
IVHS	2	33,2	BB
ATVHS	1	16,6	BA
AVHS	1	16,6	BA
RHS	1	16,6	BB

Table 4.5. shows that contrary to the common expectation that successful students are likely to be graduates of Anatolian high schools where the number of English classes is more, only 33,3% of the successful students graduated from ATVHS

and AVHS; and those students were in the BA range whereas one TVHS graduate led the group with AA.

Following successful students, the high school types of average students will be given in the next table. There were 8 students in the average category. Table 4.6 below shows the types of high school average students graduated from.

Table 4.6. Types of high school average students graduated from

HS Types	N of Ss	% of HS type	GPA Letter Grade
TVHS	1	12,5	CB
	1	12,5	DD
IVHS	1	12,5	CB
	1	12,5	CC
	1	12,5	DC
	1	12,5	DD
THS	1	12,5	DC
MPHS	1	12,5	CC

Table 4.6. shows that the cumulation is in the average group with 8 students, and the majority of these students graduated either from industrial vocational high schools (n=4, 50%) and trade vocational high schools (n=2, 25%). As the total percentage of different types of vocational high school graduates forms 75% of the student population in the average group, it may be inferred that vocational high school graduate students could be considered representative of average level English students.

Finally, in the weak category, there were 2 students. These students were not able to score enough points to pass the English course in their vocational college and failed. Table 4.7 gives information on weak students.

Table 4.7. Types of high school weak students graduated from

HS Types	% of HS type	N of Ss	GPA Letter Grade
ATVHS	50	1	FF
IVHS	50	1	FF

It is interesting to see one more time that contrary to the common expectation that students in Anatolian high school types have better English knowledge, one student who graduated from an Anatolian high school type appeared in the weak category. What makes this finding more interesting is that the ATVHS graduate student displayed the same performance as the graduate of IVHS who did not have any English classes in the last two years of high school. Additionally, the student in the successful group who had the highest GPA was a graduate of TVHS, and the students in the average group who had the highest GPA were graduates of TVHS and IVHS.

As one of the purposes of this study was to define the characteristics of vocational college students in term of their English performance, the type of high school students graduated from was taken into consideration to see if it had an effect on the students' performance. The findings of this study showed that it did not have an effect on students' performance in vocational college.

4.2. Findings of Data Analysis Regarding the Second Research Question

The second research question aimed to identify the participating students' opinions about the contribution of the English courses to their future professional and daily lives, and it was formulated as: *“What are the students' opinions about the contribution of the English courses to their future professional and daily lives?”*

4.2.1. Contribution of English courses in college to students' future professional and daily lives

The interview question asked for collecting participating students' opinions about the contribution of the English courses was: *"Do you think the English courses you take during your college education will contribute to your professional and daily life in the future?"* Opinions of the students will be presented in the same format established in the previous section.

4.2.1.1. Successful students' opinions

The analyses of the interviews showed clearly that three opinions emerged in the group. The first one was expressed as a contribution to professional life which was *"to be able to read and understand professional literature in English."* Students opinions on this issue were twofold as *short term* and *long term*. The second opinion was *"communicating with foreigners"* in their future daily lives. The third opinion expressed was that the students needed English *"both for their professional and daily lives"*.

Two students (33,3%) (EC1, EC7) pointed out that English courses would contribute to their professional lives only. These students stated the reason as to why English classes would contribute to their professional lives as *to be able to read and understand professional literature in English*. The students stated that this was a skill they needed for two reasons: *to do an assignment in college (short term)* and *to be current in the field as a professional (long term)*. For doing an academic assignment (*short term*), student EC1 remarked:

"English will contribute to my career more than it will contribute to my personal life as I have to do research on materials written in English in my department."

For being able to read and understand literature for future professional purposes (*long term*), student EC7 remarked:

“English courses in college contribute to students’ careers because most of the circuit components are English words. For example, a technician who works for an electronic technical service may be able to use the program by heart, but, in no way, can he correct the error if he does not know English, namely, he cannot figure out the error. If our English is good, we will be able to learn and understand new developments in our field in the future as well. That’s why knowing English well is a must.”

The second opinion that emerged among the students was the contribution of learning English to their *daily lives only*. One student (16,7%) (SS1) in the successful group stated that the contribution of English education in college would be to his daily life so that he could communicate with foreigners when he would go abroad:

“Learning English is useful because when I go abroad in the future, there will be a need for English in my life.”

Three students (50%) (EC2, SS5, SS8) in the successful group thought that the contribution would be to *both professional and daily lives* as students needed to use English at work after graduation, and also, English is needed to communicate with foreigners when they would go abroad. As EC2, SS5, and SS8 stated:

“English courses will have a bigger contribution to our professional lives. Now English is a world-language. The explanations on circuits and components are made in English, that’s why English is important in order to understand them when we work. It is the same in my daily life. If a tourist asks me directions, I should be able to reply to him/her.” EC2

“Actually, English has already become a global language so we need to learn it to communicate. Learning English is also compulsory for our job, that’s why it is compulsory.” SS5

“As Turkey is a country which has direct contacts with many foreign countries, in every field of work we need English. Besides, English will be useful to us

when we want to communicate with people from other countries. When we go abroad, it will be useful for us to learn about their lives as well.” SS8

Table 4.8 presents the opinions of the participating successful students' answers to the second research question.

Table 4.8. Successful students' opinions about the contribution of the English courses

Walk of life	Contribution of the English courses	N of students	% in the group
Professional life only	1. To follow professional literature	1	16,6%
	1a. Short term: to do academic assignments in courses	1	16,6%
	1b. Long term: to be current in the field as a professional		
Daily life only	1. Communication with foreigners	1	16,6%
Both professional and daily lives	1. Professional use after college	3	50%
	2. Communication with foreigners		

4.2.1.2. Average students' opinions

Like the students in the successful group, the average group students stated three opinions about the contribution of the English courses in college, which were the contribution to professional life only, to daily life only, and to both professional and daily life. The students stating the professional life contribution only pointed out two reasons: the first reason was *the need to learn the jargon of their professions*; this idea was put forward by the students in the EC group. The other opinion - *employment in a field other than student's major* was expressed by a student in the SS group who stated that employment in her field might not be easy to find, and that learning English in college and stating English as a learned skill in her resume could be an obvious advantage for finding employment in a field other than her major of study in college. The students stating contribution to daily life only mentioned that they would need

English to communicate with foreigners. The students who stated the contribution to both professional and daily life pointed out the opinions of *learning the jargon for EC department, employment in a field other than student's major for SS department, and communication with foreigners.*

Firstly, there were three students (37,5%) (EC3, EC5, SS7) in the average group who thought that the English courses would contribute to their professional lives only. They stated two reasons about the contribution of learning English to professional life. The first reason stated by the students of the EC department was the need to learn the jargon of their profession. As EC3 and EC5 remarked:

“Communication technology is based on electronics. Most of the electronic components' names are in English. They do not have Turkish equivalents. People do not use the Turkish names for them, and they prefer the terms in foreign languages. For instance, ‘port’ is the term for internet connection. For these reasons, English is important.” EC3

“Especially professionally we have to know English because most of the circuit elements are in English.” EC5

Employment in a field other than student's major was another point made in the statement of the student SS7 in the SS group. As SS7 pointed out:

“The English courses in college will contribute well to my career. Language competence is a good skill to write on a CV. I may not be able to find a job in my field of study, and I may look for a job in another field. So, stating in my resume that I know English will help me find a job.”

Secondly, two students (25%) (SS2, SS6) in the average group believed that English courses would contribute to their daily lives only. Those students indicated the same reasons which successful students mentioned. Students SS2 and SS6 stated the point of communication with foreigners in their following words:

“If I go abroad in the future, English courses might have a contribution there. There is a big difference between knowing English and not knowing it. We are

going to be a member of the European Union. All of us should know at least three languages, and English is the leading language of them all. We have to learn it.” SS2

“English is a must, and the English courses are always useful and necessary. If we want to communicate with foreigners, we need to learn English.” SS6

Thirdly, there were three students (37,5%) (EC4, EC8, SS4) in the average group who thought that the English courses in college would contribute to both their professional and daily lives. The reasons they stated were the use of English at work after graduation and the need for English in communication with foreigners. As SS4 stated:

“English courses help us reach a certain level, and this is good in that we can communicate with foreigners coming from abroad. It is also important in international business.”

The other points made by average students about the contribution of English to both professional and daily lives of students were *to need to learn the jargon of the profession* and *to communicate with foreigners*. As EC4 and EC8 pointed out in his following statements:

“I believe in the importance of language learning in terms of both professional and personal respects. Our department is based on English, and most of the components’ names are English. As we take English courses, we can easily pronounce those names. It is easier. If we did not take English classes, they would sound strange to us when we heard them. English is essential, especially in view of the fact that we are students in the ‘Electronic Communication’ department.” EC4

“English is essential both in our professional and daily lives. For example, it is necessary when someone goes abroad. And, in professional life, the words written on the machines we use are in English. There are not any Turkish words. That’s why English courses are useful.” EC8

Table 4.9 presents the opinions of the students in the average group about the contribution of the English courses in college.

Table 4.9. Average students' opinions about the contribution of the English courses

Walk of Life	Contribution of the English courses	N of students	% in the group
Professional life	1.To learn professional jargon	2	25%
	2. Employment in a field other than student's major	1	12,5%
Daily life	1. Communication with foreigners	2	25%
Both professional and daily life	1. To learn professional jargon	2	25%
	2. Communication with foreigners	3	37.5%
	3. Employment in a field other than student's major	1	12.5%

4.2.1.3. Weak students' opinions

Two opinions emerged in the weak group, which were the contribution of English to professional life only and the contribution of English to both professional and daily life. One of the two students in the group remarked that the contribution of English would be to students' professional lives as they needed *to learn the jargon* in the field of Electronic Communication. The second student stated that English would contribute both to their professional and daily lives. However, he did not elaborate on his opinion. There were no students in the weak group who thought that the English courses in college would contribute to their daily lives.

As was mentioned, student EC6 in the weak group stated that learning English in college would contribute to her professional life because she needed to learn the jargon of her field (EC) as she stated:

"English is more important with regard to professional life as students need to learn the jargon."

The other student (SS3) in the weak group believed that English education would contribute to both professional and daily life:

“I think English courses have a good contribution to both my career and daily life. English is everywhere. We need it in all walks of life.”

The opinions of the weak group are presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10. Weak students’ opinions about the contribution of the English courses

Walk of Life	Contribution of the English courses	N of students	% in the group
Professional life	To learn professional jargon	1	50%
Both professional and daily life	No further reason specified	1	50%

4.2.1.4. Summary of the groups’ opinions

Students responded to the second interview question in three different ways: some considered English to be important only in their professional lives while some thought English education would contribute only to their future daily lives. In addition to these two different opinions, some students stated that English education would contribute both to their professional and daily lives. Table 4.11. summarizes how students answered the second research question. The number of students and the percentages can be found for each category. Total and specific numbers are presented as well.

Table 4.11. Summary of the groups' opinions

Contribution of the English courses	Successful Ss		Average Ss		Weak Ss		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional	3	50	3	37,5	1	50	7	44
Daily	1	33	2	25	-	-	3	19
Both	2	17	3	37,5	1	50	6	37

After the presentation of the numeric distribution of students' answers to the second interview question, a comparison of the students' explanations for each answer will be made at this point. While there were some common points in each group about the contribution of the English courses in college to students' lives, some ideas were seen uniquely in some groups. Regarding the students' opinions about the contribution of English to professional life, the idea of using the professional literature in English either to do an assignment in college or for professional purposes after graduation was put forward by only successful students.

Learning the jargon was a common idea that emerged both in the average and weak groups. Employment in a field other than the student's major was seen only in the average group.

Regarding the contribution to daily life, one opinion, which was using English to communicate with foreigners when going abroad, was pointed out by both successful and average students. There were no students in the weak group who told that English courses in college would contribute to their daily lives only.

Regarding the contribution of English to both professional and daily life, using English at work after graduation, and communication with foreigners when going abroad were the common points stated by the students in the successful and average groups. In addition to this, learning professional jargon was pointed out by the students

in the average and weak groups. Opinions of all groups about the contribution of the English courses in college to their future lives only are presented in Table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12. Summary of the groups' opinions about the contribution of the English courses to their lives

Contribution of English to Ss'	Successful Ss	Average Ss	Weak Ss
Professional life	1. To follow professional literature	1. To learn professional jargon 2. Employment in a field other than student's major	1. To learn professional jargon
Daily life	1. Communication with foreigners	1. Communication with foreigners	-
Both professional and daily life	1. Professional use after college 2. Communication with foreigners	1. To learn professional jargon 2. Employment in a field other than student's major 3. Communication with foreigners	-

4.3. Findings of Data Analysis Regarding the Third Research Question

The third research question of this study was “*What are the students' opinions about the usefulness of the English courses in vocational college? In what respects do the students find the courses useful? Why?*” In the interviews, three subquestions were formulated in order to find detailed answers. The purpose of the questions was to find out students' individual assessment of the usefulness of the English courses they were taking in vocational college. The subquestions were: “*Do you find the English courses in your college useful? In what respects are they useful? Why?*” The answers provided by the successful, average, and weak students will be presented in the sections that

follow. The answers of the groups will be followed by a summary section as was previously done.

4.3.1. Successful students' opinions

In the successful group, negative ideas emerged about the usefulness of the English courses in college. Regarding the degree of their satisfaction with the English courses, the students expressed two different opinions. Based on their opinions, the students' satisfaction with the English course could be described either as *not very useful* or *not useful at all*. The participants who found the English courses *not very useful* or *not useful at all* stated five reasons that affected their evaluation of the usefulness of the English courses which were *the repetitive content, the content's not being relevant to students' daily communication needs, the content's not being relevant to students' future professional needs, the inefficiency of the techniques used in classroom practice, and limited number of class hours*. The statements made by the students in the successful group will be presented below in order to give a detailed picture of their opinions about the usefulness of the English courses in college.

Of the six students in the successful group, four students (66,6%) expressed that the English courses in college were not very useful. Those students were EC1, SS1, SS5, and SS8. As for their reasons, the students mentioned that the content of the lessons was repetitive and never went beyond the basic level vocabulary and grammar. As the course content focused on grammar and vocabulary, there was no teaching of communication skills, and the students stated that they could not learn how to communicate in English which means the content of the courses was not relevant to meet students' daily communication needs. The students also mentioned that the course content was not relevant to satisfy their professional needs at a level they had expected. The repetitive course content was thus not able to address students' expectations and needs.

Another point made by the successful student group was that the classroom techniques used by the teachers in classes were not useful at all. The students were

mainly responsible for copying and memorizing what was written on the board by the teacher, and speaking was not a skill taught and practiced in the class. Reading aloud either a reading passage or an answer to a grammar exercise was the closest activity to speaking, and the students had difficulties speaking English, a skill they definitely considered important. From this point on the students' statements will be presented to illustrate the points made.

The first reason was the repetitive content of the English courses as was stated by a student:

"We always study grammar. We studied grammar in secondary school. We studied grammar in high school. We study grammar here." SS5

The second reason stated by the students was the content's not being relevant to their daily communication needs as there was no teaching of communication skills:

"If I see a tourist by chance and the tourist asks an address, I think the best I could do would be to give directions. I cannot speak more." SS1

"The English courses in college are not very useful because the goal of the courses is not improving speaking skills. If I came across a foreigner, I would not be able to explain anything to him/her. In the class, we write down everything because the teacher wants us to. The lessons should focus on speaking more." SS5

"I do not think that English courses are one hundred percent useful. Even when we understand what people say, we don't know how to respond to them in English because neither our English is good, nor we know how to speak English. We know the words and how to make a sentence when we cover a grammar subject, but we cannot say what we want to say in English. I mean, we cannot communicate in English." SS8

The third reason was the content's not being relevant to students' professional needs:

“The English courses that we take in college are not very useful. We have to learn more; English is used to refer to most of the materials we will use in our profession, but the English we learn here does not teach us anything about our professional needs because we do not learn the specific type of English we need and the vocabulary we must know in the English courses.” EC1

The fourth reason was the inefficiency of the techniques used in classroom practice, exemplified in the following statements:

“The teacher tells us to read the reading text, but we do not understand it. We do the reading exercises by directly copying most of the answers from the book rather than figuring them out. In the class, we write down everything because the teacher wants us to. The lessons should focus on speaking more.” SS5

“The courses are based on copying what is written on the board by the teacher. We know the words and how to make a sentence when we cover a grammar subject, but we cannot say what we want to say in English.” SS8

The second negative idea stated by two students (33,3%) (EC2, EC7) in the successful group was that the English courses in college were not useful at all. According to EC2 and EC7, covering the repetitive content could only help them revise the basic knowledge of English, and they could not make much improvement over the years. The students' remarks about covering the repetitive content are presented below:

“English courses in college are not useful at all as we are taught basic English once again at the moment. We do not learn anything new in the class. We have been seeing the same things since secondary school. In high school, we learned English in the first year and developed mainly what we learned more during the second, third, and fourth years. English should be taught more extensively at the university level.” EC2

“We have been taught the same English subjects year after year. The subjects are the same and we are not taught anything new. “The simple present tense” has been taught for years. We always follow the same subjects and stay at the

same level. We cannot move on to the next step. Therefore, the English courses we take in college are not useful at all.” EC7

One student mentioned that the limited number of instruction hours was a reason for the English courses’ in college not being useful at all:

“If we want to learn English, it will solely be the result of individual effort on our side. A four-hour-a- week course like this is not enough for university students.” EC2

To conclude the main ideas stated by the students in the successful group, the students expressed two negative opinions about the usefulness of the English courses which were the courses’ being either *not very useful* or *not useful at all*. Those ideas together with the reasons given about them are summarized in Table 4.13. below.

Table 4.13. Successful students’ opinions about the usefulness of college English courses

Usefulness of college English courses	Reasons	N of Ss	% of opinion
Not very useful	1. Repetitive content	1	16,6
	2. Content not relevant to Ss’ daily communication needs	3	50
	3. Content not relevant to Ss’ professional needs	1	16,6
	4. Inefficient classroom techniques	2	33,3
Not useful at all	1. Repetitive content	2	33,3
	2. Limited number of class hours	1	16,6

The ideas stated by the successful students revealed that the most common point about the usefulness of the English courses in college was covering a repetitive content and content’s not being relevant to students’ needs. One student mentioned that the content was thoroughly repetitive, and they were not learning anything new. Three students mentioned that the English courses in college did not include any teaching of

communication skills and by stating this, they mentioned the course's not teaching students basic communication skills which would enable them to carry out a simple conversation with a foreigner. Another student explained the irrelevance of the content by referring to the courses' limited contribution to their professional development, and this showed that the English courses in college did not only fail to meet students' immediate communication needs, but they were also insufficient to meet students' future needs.

The second point seen in the statements of the successful students was that inefficient classroom techniques were used in the English courses in college. The students stated that they were not able to learn English because copying the notes of the teacher was the mostly used technique in the classes. The third point was the limited number of instruction hours. One student in the group believed that there should be more class hours.

These three points indicate that successful students mainly believed that factors external to the students played an important role in their evaluations of the usefulness of English courses. No reason that is internal to students is reported by the successful students.

4.3.2. Average students' opinions

Similar to the students in the successful group, students in the average group stated two negative opinions about the usefulness of the English courses in college. None of the eight students in the group found the English courses in college useful. As will be seen below, the majority of them thought the courses were *not very useful*. Minority of them stated that the courses were *not useful at all*.

Of the eight students in the average group, five students (62,5%) pointed out that the English courses were *not very useful*. Those students were EC3, EC4, EC5, SS4, and SS7, and they stated four reasons for their dissatisfaction with the courses, which were *the repetitive content of the courses, inefficient techniques in classroom practice, word*

or phrase level communication, and lack of individual effort to learn English after school.

As was mentioned above, the first reason was the repetitive content of the courses. Students EC3, EC4, and EC5 stated that they studied the same topics repeatedly:

“English courses are useful but only in one respect. That is, students never need to make revisions after the lessons as the lessons have been a kind of revision since the secondary school. Students revise the topics with the teacher’s help in the classroom.” EC3

“I think English courses are not very useful. We have been studying English since primary school, but in this way: revising the same grammar structures all the time!” EC4

“I find English lessons partially useful because we have been covering the same basic topics since the primary school. Some other topics can be studied.” EC5

The second reason was the use of inefficient techniques in classroom practice. As students EC5, SS4, and SS7 stated:

“We are asked to translate the sentences in the textbook to understand them, but our English is not enough to help us understand all of those sentences. Students feel this is difficult and get bored eventually. The lessons can be taught in different ways. When there are different activities to do, they may arouse our attention. We want to do different things in class.” EC5

“We are constantly copying the things written on the board. We copy and copy. I get bored.” SS4

“English classes mean grammar. Nobody teaches us how to use English to communicate. I don’t even think that I can communicate with a tourist now. It

would be better if English were taught in a way so that we can manage daily conversations.” SS7

The third reason was that even though students were taking English courses in college, they could communicate only at word or phrase level. As students EC4 and SS4 stated:

“I live in a coastal town, and if I come across a tourist, I try to make myself understood by using only the words and phrases I have learned in English lessons, not sentences.” EC4

“My English is good only to tell words if I have to talk to a foreigner.” SS4

The fourth and the last reason mentioned was the lack of individual effort made by the students to learn English or improve what they had already learned or studied:

“I can’t say that I individually spend effort to improve my English further. The majority of the students are like me; they don’t have any contact with English after the class.” EC4

There were three students (37,5%) in the average group who thought that the English courses in college were *not useful at all*. Those students were SS2, SS6, and SS8, and they stated two reasons to explain their opinions, which were *the repetitive content* and *being unable to use English knowledge outside the classroom*.

The first reason was the repetitive content. One student stated that there was nothing new to learn in the courses and the usefulness of the courses was limited only to help the students make the passing grade. If there was any usefulness of the English course, it would be its helping students achieve a passing grade as he mentioned:

“English courses are not useful to us whatsoever. They help us only to get a passing grade, but there is nothing new we learn in the class. We attend the classes only to get a passing grade.” SS6

One student mentioned that they covered the same content over the years, that's why the English courses in college were not useful at all:

"English courses are not useful at all. I have been taking English courses since the fourth grade. I have not benefitted from them. There is no progress. Everything is the same. We study the same topics, and this does not make sense." SS8

The second reason was being unable to use English knowledge outside the classroom. One student found the English courses not useful at all as he had found no place to put to use anything that he learned in the course whatsoever. According to this student, usefulness of a course could be determined by the extent it allowed the student to function individually in real life contexts. He pointed out that he did not have any opportunities to use English outside the school:

"I study English to pass the course, but I cannot really say whether the English courses are useful or not. I have not seen anything useful so far. I don't know how I can use English outside the class." SS2

As seen, all the ideas emerged in the average group were negative as well. Those ideas together with the details stated about them are summarized in Table 4.14. below.

Table 4.14. Average students' opinions about the usefulness of college English courses

Usefulness of college English courses	The reason	N of Ss	% of opinion
Not very useful	1. Repetitive content	3	37,5
	2. Inefficient classroom techniques	3	37,5
	3. Word or phrase level communication	2	25
	4. Lack of individual effort	1	12,5
Not useful at all	1. Repetitive content	2	25
	2. Unable to use English knowledge outside the classroom	1	12,5

The points emerged in the statements of the students in the average group mostly included factors external to the students as the majority of the students in the group pointed out that repetitive content was a factor in determining the usefulness of the English courses in college, and some of the students in the group mentioned the inefficient techniques used in classroom practice. Some students stated that they could communicate only at word or phrase level.

The minority of the students in the average group stated two factors that were internal to the students to explain their opinions about the usefulness of the English courses in college: Some of the students stated that they did not exert any individual effort to learn English, and one stated they were unable to make any judgements about the English courses' usefulness.

4.3.3. Weak students' opinions

Students in the weak group put forward two ideas about the usefulness of the English courses in college, one of which was negative and the other was positive. One student (50%) stated that the English courses in college were *not very useful* because *the content was repetitive and it was not relevant to their daily and professional lives*. The other student (50%) pointed out that English courses in college were *useful* because *they could communicate with tourists*.

One student (EC6) thought that English courses were not very useful. She explained her opinions by mentioning factors external to the students. Not making progress because of the repetitive content was the first reason the student stated:

“English courses are not sufficiently useful. They are of use in terms of basic English knowledge only, but it would be better if we moved a step further.” EC6

Covering the content not relevant to both their daily communication needs and future professional needs was the second reason:

“It would be better if we learned how to speak a little and knew enough English related to our field instead of grammar only.” EC6

One student pointed out that English courses were *useful* in terms of communication with tourists. However, it must be stated that this student failed the course. Therefore, it is not reasonable to conclude that she used the course content which she was not able to master in order to communicate with foreigners, because all the students in the successful group and the majority of the students in the average group thought that the course content was not relevant either to students' professional or daily needs. This student's statement could be explained by her relatively high chances of seeing foreigners in the coastal town she resided. As she stated in her following words:

“I find English courses useful. For instance, when I come across a tourist (maybe in Akçakoca), I can talk to him/her.” SS3

Two opinions in the weak group about the usefulness of English courses in college will be presented in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15. Weak students' opinions about the usefulness of college English courses

Usefulness of college English courses	The reason	N of Ss	% of opinion
Not very useful	1. Repetitive content	1	50
	2. Content not relevant to Ss' needs (both professional and daily)	1	50
Useful	1. Communicate with tourists	1	50

4.3.4. Summary of the groups' opinions

Regarding the answers of the students to the third interview question, two different ideas emerged from the statements of the participating students. The first idea was negative as the majority of the students stated that the English courses in college were not very useful, and some of them stated that those courses were not useful at all. The second idea was positive but only one student in the weak group stated that the English courses in college were useful. Table 4.16. summarizes the ideas of the participants about the usefulness of the English courses in college, including the number and percentages for successful, average, and weak groups.

Table 4.16. Summary of the groups' opinions

Usefulness of the college English courses	Successful		Average		Weak		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not very useful	4	67	5	62,5	1	50	10	62,5
Not useful at all	2	33	3	37,5	-	-	5	31,25
Useful	-	-	-	-	1	50	1	6,25

The numeric distribution of the participating students' answers revealed that students mostly came up with the idea that English courses they took in college were not very useful. Successful students put forward four reasons about the issue, which were the repetitive content, content's not being relevant to their professional needs, content's not being relevant to their daily communication needs, and inefficient techniques used in classroom practice. In the average group, the students who found the English courses in college not very useful stated four reasons, which were the repetitive content, inefficient classroom techniques, word or phrase level communication, and lack of individual effort. One weak student agreed that the English courses they took in college were not very useful because of the content's not being relevant to students' both professional and daily communication needs and the repetitive content.

The next opinion students stated was that English courses they took in college were not useful at all. Students in the successful group with this opinion stated that the content of the English courses in college was repetitive and the number of instruction hours was limited. The students in the average group who agreed with that opinion stated that the content of the courses was repetitive, and the students were unable to use their English knowledge outside the classroom. There were not any students in the weak group who stated that the English courses they took in college were not useful at all.

The only positive opinion emerged in the weak group. One student stated that the English courses in college were useful because they helped her talk to tourists.

Opinions of all groups about the usefulness of the English courses in college are summarized in Table 4.17. below.

Table 4.17. Summary of the groups' opinions on the usefulness of English courses

Usefulness of college English courses	Successful Ss	Average Ss	Weak Ss
Not very useful	1. Repetitive content 2. Content not relevant to Ss' daily communication needs 3. Content not relevant to Ss' professional needs 4. Inefficient classroom techniques	1. Repetitive content 2. Inefficient classroom techniques 3. Word or phrase level communication 4. Lack of individual effort	1. Content not relevant to Ss' daily communication needs 2. Content not relevant to Ss' professional needs
Not useful at all	1. Repetitive content 2. Limited number of classes	1. Repetitive content 2. Unable to use English knowledge outside the classroom	-
Useful	-	-	1. Communication with tourists

As seen in the Table 4.17 above, the majority of the students' ideas were related to factors external to the students as repetitive content and content's not being relevant to the students' needs were the mostly mentioned reasons. The use of inefficient techniques in classroom practice was the next common opinion, which was followed by communication only at word or phrase level, and being unable to use English knowledge outside the classroom. However, there was only one opinion related to the

factors internal to the students and it was lack of individual effort. Consequently, all these opinions indicate that students thought the factors that were external to them played an important role in their learning in the English courses they took. They believed that if some innovations or improvements were made in the curriculum of the English courses, they would learn better.

4.4. Findings of Data Analysis Regarding the Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question of this study was: *“What are the students’ opinions about the necessity of the English courses currently taught in vocational college?”* Three subquestions which were related to the students’ individual assessment of the necessity of the English courses they were taking in vocational college were asked in the interviews to get comprehensive answers to the fourth research question. The subquestions were: *“Do you think the English courses currently taught in your departments in college are necessary? Do you think these courses should be removed from your curriculum? Why?”* The answers of successful, average, and weak students will be presented in the same format used to report previous findings.

4.4.1. Successful students’ opinions

Two ideas emerged in the successful group about the necessity of the English courses in college. The first idea was that the students found the English courses in their departments *necessary* because English was essential for professional needs. The second idea expressed by the participating students was that the English courses in their departments were *not necessary*. However, all the students in the successful group agreed on the point that English courses should not be removed from their curriculum in their departments.

Four successful students (33,3%) (EC1, EC2, EC7, SS5) stated that English courses were necessary for their departments because they would need English in their professions in the future:

“English courses are essential for our professional needs. These courses should not be removed, and they should be given much more importance instead. They are a must-have in our profession.” EC1

“I think that a person who does not know English cannot improve himself in his work. One person may know a computer program by heart, but he cannot deal with the error given. He/she cannot be aware of the programs’ requirements. So, English is necessary for our department. The courses should not be removed.” EC7

“I believe that English is an indispensable part of our lives. I think that we see English everywhere such as computers, terms in the field of social security, so we have to know it. For all these reasons, English courses are necessary and should not be removed.” SS5

Student EC2 agreed that they would need English for professional purposes and he also suggested that the number of English classes should be increased:

“We are directly in relation with English terms even in theory although we have not covered the topic circuit components yet. For instance, we use the English terms ‘input’ and ‘output’ instead of their Turkish equivalents even when we speak Turkish during classes. I think increasing the number of English class hours is a good idea rather than removing it.”

There were two students (33,4%) (SS1, SS8) in the successful group who thought that English courses were not necessary for their majors as they did not need to use English when they study. However, student SS8 believed that the courses should not be removed from their curriculum because of future needs for finding a job. As he explained:

“In my opinion, English courses should not be removed. We should not evaluate them only from the perspective of our department. If we do so, the courses may be removed as they are not necessary for our department. We do not use English when we study. However, I think English will be useful in my career as I

may work anywhere in the future, and I will say I know English when I apply for a job. It will be an advantage for me. So, they should not be removed."

Student SS1 in the successful group stated that he did not have any clear idea as to what kind of employment he would have after graduation as the job prospects of the Social Security department graduates were not clear. Due to this uncertainty, the student stated that even though he saw no direct relevance of the English courses in his department, the English course should not be removed from the curriculum in case he found a job that would require the knowledge of English in the future. He stated:

"As I do not have any idea about the future of a graduate in our department, I do not know whether the English courses are necessary or not. I think it will be better if the courses are not removed. Maybe they will be beneficial related to the job we will do in the future."

As was mentioned, the students in the successful group came up with two ideas about the necessity of the English courses in college, and they all suggested that English courses should not be removed from their curriculum. They mostly focused on their professional needs to explain the reason why English courses should not be removed from their curriculum. Table 4.18. shows the ideas emerged in the successful group about the necessity of the English courses in college.

Table 4.18. Successful students' opinions

Necessity of English courses in college	The reason	N of the students	% in the group
Necessary – should not be removed	1. Professional needs	4	66,6
Not necessary – should not be removed	1. Possible employment in a field other than student's major	2	33,4

4.4.2. Average students' opinions

Three different ideas emerged in the average group about the necessity of the English courses in college. The majority of the students thought that the English courses were *necessary* in their departments and these courses should *not be removed* from their curriculum. The second idea was that the English courses were *not necessary* for their departments, *but* these courses should *not be removed* from their curriculum. The third idea emerged in the group was that the English courses were *not necessary* in their departments, and that these courses should *be removed* from their curriculum.

The majority of the students in the average group thought that English courses were necessary and should not be removed from their curriculum. There were five students (62,5%) (EC3, EC4, EC5, EC8, and SS4), and professional need was the main reason stated by them, in their following explanations:

“English courses are necessary and they should not be removed. We have to know English if we want to study and work in the field of Electronic Communication.” EC3

“English courses are necessary and should not be removed as we use English words and have to read texts in English all the time in our department. There is English in everything we do.” EC8

“I think we will need English one day. We are going to use computers at work, and we may need English to use some programs. These courses are necessary, and it is impossible to remove them.” SS4

The need for English is felt clearly by the students in the EC department who even suggested that there should be an English preparatory year in vocational colleges, or the current number of the English courses should be increased:

“English is necessary, and there should be a preparatory year of English for our department. We have been learning the meaning of the words by memorizing

since the very beginning of the courses in our field as we need them when we work. In my opinion, the content of these courses should be improved.” EC4

“These courses are necessary and should not be removed; the number of lessons should be increased instead. We need English in our studies in this department, and we will need it when we work in the future, too.” EC5

There was one student (12,5%) (SS7) in the average group who stated that the English courses were not necessary for their department, but he suggested that English courses should not be removed from their curriculum because he might work in another field in the future and he may need English there:

“I do not think that a student in the department of Social Security needs English. However, the English courses should not be removed. We do not have any guarantee that we will work in this field. We may work in any field and we may need English there. That’s why, the English courses should not be removed.”

Contrary to the opinion that the English courses were necessary, two average group students (25%) who continued their studies in the SS department stated that the English courses in their department were not necessary. Those students suggested that the English courses be removed from their curriculum because, firstly, they did not need it professionally, and, secondly, they did not learn anything beneficial in those courses. In addition, they were having difficulties in getting passing grades in an unnecessary course:

“I think that English courses are not necessary for my department. I do not expect that I will need to use English in my professional life. That’s why, I suggest that the English courses should be removed.” SS2

“As the courses are not beneficial for us, they can be removed from the curriculum. We cannot learn anything, and we have difficulties in getting a passing grade.” SS6

As was mentioned, the ideas about the necessity of the English courses in college pointed out by the students in the average group were that the courses were necessary and should not be removed, the courses were not necessary but should not be removed, and, finally, the courses were not necessary and should be removed. The opinions of the average group are given in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19. Average students' opinions

Necessity of the English courses in college	The reason	N of the Ss	% in the group
Necessary - should not be removed	1. Professional needs	5	62,5
Not necessary (should not be removed)	1. Employment in a field other than student's major SS	1	12,5
Not necessary – should be removed	1. No professional need	1	12,5
	2. Difficulty in getting passing grades	1	12,5

4.4.3. Weak students' opinions

There were two opposing views in the weak group. One opinion was that the English courses were necessary for their department, and these courses should not be removed from their curriculum. The other opinion was that the English courses were not necessary for their department, and they should be removed from their curriculum.

Student EC6 thought that English courses were necessary for their department, and they should not be removed from the curriculum. But, she suggested that the content of the courses should be changed:

“English courses are necessary for our department, and they should not be removed. But, we should not study the same topics, we should learn new things.”

Student SS3 stated that the English courses were not necessary and could be removed from the curriculum because there was no professional need for them:

“I do not believe that we will need English in our profession, so these courses can be removed from our curriculum.”

The two ideas about the necessity of the English courses in college in the weak group are presented in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20. Weak students’ opinions

Necessity of English courses in college	The reason	N of the students	% in the group
Necessary – should not be removed	Professional need	1	50
Not necessary – should be removed	No professional need	1	50

4.4.4. Summary of the groups’ opinions

Regarding the answers of participating students to the fourth interview question, the majority of the students stated that English courses were necessary for their departments, and these courses should not be removed from their curricula. They thought that they would always need to use English in their professions. The students who thought that the English courses were not necessary for their departments can be divided into two: the students who thought that English courses should be removed as there was no need for English in their fields and the ones who suggested the course should not be removed as they might need English in any case. Table 4.21 presents the ideas of the participants about the necessity of the English courses in college, including the number and percentages for successful, average, and weak groups.

Table 4.21. Summary of the groups' opinions

Necessity of the English courses in college	Successful		Average		Weak		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Necessary – should not be removed	4	66,6	5	62,5	1	50	10	62,5
Not necessary – should not be removed	2	33,4	1	12,5	-	-	3	18,75
Not necessary – should be removed	-	-	2	25	1	50	3	18,75

The explanations students made about the necessity of the English courses for their departments revealed that students who thought that they would need English for their professions after graduation stated that the English courses were necessary and should not be removed from their curriculum. It can be understood from the students' statements that rather than English achievement of the students, their departments was a factor in their ideas. The reason for this point is that most of the students in the department of Electronic Communication pointed out that they were going to use English in their jobs as the jargon of their field mainly includes English vocabulary. On the other hand, some students in the department of Social Security believed that they did not need to use English extensively for daily professional use in the future, and that was the reason why they did not have to learn it. The opinions of all groups about the necessity of the English courses in college and the related reasons they mentioned are presented in Table 4.22. below.

Table 4.22. Opinions of all groups

Necessity of English courses	Successful Ss	Average Ss Reason	Weak Ss
Necessary – should not be removed	1. Professional need	1. Professional need	1. No reason
Not necessary – should not be removed	1. Possible employment in a field other than student's major	1. No professional need 2. Difficulty in getting passing grades	-
Not necessary – should be removed	-	1. No professional need	1. No professional need

In this chapter, findings regarding four research questions formulated at the beginning of this study were presented. Participating students' answers to the interview questions and their opinions were given under successful, average, and weak groups established according to student GPAs. Student opinions were summarized in tables for all groups at the end of each section. The following chapter will include the conclusion, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER V

5. Conclusion

This qualitative research study was carried out in order to answer four research questions. As was mentioned in the review of literature, there has been no study on the English courses in vocational colleges and the matter of defining the characteristics of the vocational college students in terms their achievement in English courses. That's why, the results of this study are incomparable with the results of the studies mentioned previously as those studies were conducted in the four-year faculties and primary, secondary, or high schools.

The first research question was formulated in order to identify the characteristics of successful, average, and weak students studying English in vocational college. In order to determine the general characteristics of each student group to form and place the participating students into them, two types of data were used to establish the student group profiles. The first type was the participating students' GPAs in the English exams in the vocational college at the time of data collection. Based on their GPAs, the participating students were placed into the successful, average, and weak groups. As the analysis showed that the majority of the students were in the average group, the term 'average' could be used to describe the general student profile in vocational college English courses in terms of students' GPAs. At this point, it would be necessary to remind once again that the English tests administered in the vocational colleges where this study was conducted were multiple-choice tests that included only three areas: grammar, vocabulary, and reading. Therefore, an "average" student is the one who is able to answer enough number of multiple-choice grammar, vocabulary, and reading items on those tests correctly to achieve a passing grade.

The second type of data used was the participating students' own personal descriptions of the successful, average, and weak students in the English courses.

Interviews were conducted with the students to obtain their opinions of the characteristics of successful, average, and weak students in the vocational college English courses. The purpose here was to see whether any discrepancies would be observed between the students' English test performances and their own descriptions. The results showed discrepancies; the most important of which was the participating students' statement of their inability to learn to speak English well. All groups agreed with that opinion as all students considered themselves weak in terms of the productive skill of speaking as they could at best speak English only at word or phrase level, using memorized items.

To answer the first research question, the third type of data used was the type of high school participating students graduated from - to be informed of their English learning background and to determine whether it might have an effect on their current performance in the English courses in vocational college. The analyses indicated that contrary to the general expectation that the graduates of Anatolian high school types would be more successful in English courses, the findings of this study showed that the leading students in the successful and average groups were graduates of non-Anatolian high school types, and that one of the two students in the weak group was a graduate of an Anatolian high school type. These results showed that the type of high school was not a factor in the English achievement of the participating vocational college students.

The second research question was asked in order to learn about the participating students' opinions about the contribution of the English courses in college, and in all groups, the opinions were either identical or similar and, thus, showed a correlation. 44% of the students stated that the contribution of the English courses in college would be to their future professional lives only, and 37% stated that the English courses in college would contribute both to their future professional and daily lives. The students who stated that the contribution of the English courses would be to their daily lives only constituted a mere 19% of the participants. The results show that the majority of the students, regardless of their department, mentioned that the English courses in college would contribute to their future professional lives. However, the students in the EC and SS departments stated different reasons to explain their opinions about the contribution

of the English courses. The students in the SS group have low career prospects in their field and knowing English may contribute to finding a job as it is a good skill to write on a resume for those students. They stated that if they were employed in a field other than their own, they might use the English they studied in college. On the other hand, the students in the EC group mentioned about learning English as a professional requirement as the terminology of their field is mainly English, and they have to learn it. They mainly stated “learning the jargon” and “following professional literature” as reasons as to how the English courses would contribute to their future professional lives. However, the English course content did not include the teaching of any vocabulary or topics related to the EC students’ department. This could mean that the students learned the professional jargon which was in English from their instructors who uttered these English words while they were teaching subjects in their departmental courses which were taught in Turkish. Thus, the English courses made no direct contribution to the students in any professional sense whatsoever.

The third research question of this study was formulated in order to capture the participating students’ opinions about the usefulness of the English courses in vocational college, and the opinions were mainly negative and showed correlation once again. 93,75% of the students did not find the English courses in vocational college useful. They stated that the courses were either “not useful at all” or “not very useful”. They stated that the content of the English courses was repetitive, and, therefore, they were not able to learn any new English. The only thing they did was to try to meet the requirement of the English course, which was getting a passing grade. One obvious implication of this finding was that, by stating negative opinions about the usefulness of the English courses, the students indirectly expressed the need to learn new content and to use the target language productively in the English courses.

Finally, the fourth research question aimed to seek the participating students’ opinions about the necessity of the current English courses in college, and the groups’ opinions showed correlation once again. 62,5% of all students stated that the English courses were necessary and should not be removed from their curriculum. 37,5% of the students did not find the English courses in vocational college necessary, and half of

them suggested that the courses should be removed from their curriculum. These results show that the majority of the students found the English courses in college necessary. However, the students in the EC and SS groups stated different reasons for the necessity. The students in the EC group stated that they needed English because the terminology was in English while the students in the SS group believed English was necessary in order to find employment after graduation. To explain further, there were not any students from the EC department who stated that the English courses were not necessary and should be removed from their curriculum. In the SS group, while some students did not find the current English courses necessary, some suggested that courses should not be removed from their curriculum because English knowledge declared on a resume would help them find a job as job prospects in their field were not bright. One conclusion is that the statements of the students about the necessity of college English courses indicate that students' departments played a more influential role on their opinions about the necessity of the English courses in vocational college. The students in the EC department found it more necessary to learn English as they would frequently need English in their future professional lives, and they wanted to study the English course content related to their profession. The SS students, on the other hand, found the courses necessary only because they would need English if they might be employed in another field.

5.1. Limitations of the Study

In this section, two limitations of this study will be presented. Each one of these deserves to be investigated in separate future research studies. To begin with, the type of high school participants graduated from was used only to explore whether there was a relation between high school types and English achievement in vocational college. That Anatolian high school graduates were not successful in the English courses they took in vocational college is a finding of this study, and it is an issue beyond the scope of this research and, thus, was not investigated. The factors that are instrumental in obtaining such a finding and why and how non-Anatolian high school type graduates

were the leading students in the successful and average groups in vocational college English courses needs to be investigated in another research study.

One other limitation was to gather the opinions of the students in only two different departments in a vocational college. Therefore, even though the results of this study are pioneering in terms of obtaining students' perspectives about the English courses in vocational college, they are not generalizable because of the limited number of departments studied.

5.2. Suggestions for Further Research

This section presents some suggestions in the light of the points made in the previous section to create better English learning opportunities for students in the English courses in vocational colleges. When the limitations of this study are taken into account, firstly, the effect of high school English education on student success in the English courses in vocational college should be investigated in another study. Secondly, in order to acquire a broader picture of the English learning and teaching in two-hour-a week or four-hour-a week English courses in vocational colleges, a research study should be commenced to gather more data from different departments in more vocational colleges to obtain a reliable country-wide general picture of the effectiveness of the English courses from students' perspectives.

Additionally, further studies need to be done in order to improve the effectiveness of English education in vocational colleges. To start with, a thoroughly realistic, easy-to-use, and teacher and learner friendly curriculum should be designed, based on the learning outcomes in CEFR. Although, course descriptions of the compulsory English courses in vocational colleges of the university in the scope of this study are made and revised at the beginning of every year according to the descriptors presented by CEFR for A1 and A2 levels, including the study of four skills equally, as the results of this study show, it is clear that the participating students were not engaged in practicing English and using the language productively both in and after the class.

One good reason for this problem is the fact that it is not possible to learn English at the projected A2 level within the current number of class hours. In the “Introductory Guide to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for English Language Teachers” (2013) by Cambridge University Press, a student needs to study approximately 90-100 guided learning hours to complete the A1 level and 180-200 guided learning hours to complete A2 level of the CEFR. As the students in the SS department take two-hour-a-week English course for two semesters, at best they can have 56 hours of English classes by the end of the twenty-eight-week academic year. The students in the EC department who take a four-hour a week English course will be able to take 112 hours of English instruction by the end of the academic year. As there is time limitation, teachers mainly teach the content they are responsible for teaching which means that teacher-dominated lessons are delivered, and as there remains not sufficient time for students to practice what they have learned, student production almost never takes place. For this reason, research should be conducted in order to prepare a realistic curriculum that would be used to teach English for the projected guided learning hours for the A1 and A2 levels and to provide students with activities to use English productively during the instruction hours.

In addition to the matter of limited number of class hours to reach the projected A1 and A2 levels, the participating students in this study also pointed out that the actual time devoted to teaching and learning during class hours may even be lesser due to factors such as instructors’ arriving late for the class or spending unnecessarily long time to take attendance. Research should be conducted to determine the actual dimensions of this problem and to identify other teacher-related factors that cause loss of instruction time so that such problems will be known and brought to the consciousness of instructors to prevent unnecessary loss of instruction time.

As the results of this study show, the new curriculum needs to include the content that provides the study of four skills equally and include new topics that go beyond what the students have been repeatedly seeing. The new course content should be designed in a way that will help students notice the usefulness and become convinced of the necessity of the English courses. The English course content may also

change from one department to another as students would prefer to learn and study the English course content related to their field of study. Especially, the English courses in the departments similar to the EC department must include material that will help students see how the English terms are used to explain and discuss the issues in their field so that they can become familiar with the professional literature in their field which, in turn, would contribute to their being able to read professional texts by themselves after graduation. These English courses may be added to the second-year curriculum, and the course syllabus may be designed to teach English for academic purposes. Research should be conducted to develop the content for vocational college English courses by primarily obtaining students' opinions to determine their professional and personal needs.

It is the hope of this researcher and her advisor that the findings of this study will lead to the betterment of English instruction in vocational colleges in this country.

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APPENDICE

APPENDICE-1. Profile information form

Değerli öğrenciler;

Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı Başkanlığı'nda yürütülmekte olan “*Meslek Yüksekokulu Öğrencilerinin Zorunlu İngilizce Derslerine İlişkin Görüşleri: Öğrenciler Ne Düşünüyor?*” konulu yüksek lisans tez araştırması için Düzce Üniversitesi, Düzce Meslek Yüksekokulu, Elektronik Haberleşme ve Sosyal Güvenlik programlarındaki öğrencilere ait bir takım demografik bilgilerin elde edilmesi gerekmektedir. Aşağıdaki kişisel bilgiler formunu eksiksiz bir şekilde doldurmanız rica olunur. Ankette verdiğiniz bilgiler kesinlikle gizli tutulacak olup, sadece araştırma kapsamında kullanılacaktır. Gösterdiğiniz ilgi için şimdiden teşekkür ederim.

Zeynep Övdür Uğurlu

Kişisel Bilgiler Anketi:

İstenilen bilgileri verilen boşluklara yazınız.

1. Adınız-Soyadınız:.....
2. Cinsiyetiniz:.....
3. Yaşınız:.....
4. Programınız:.....
5. Mezun olduğunuz lise türü:.....
6. Annenizin eğitim durumu:.....
7. Babanızın eğitim durumu:.....
8. Ailenizdeki kardeş sayısı (siz dahil):.....
9. Haftalık İngilizce ders saatleriniz:.....
10. Güz dönemindeki İngilizce 1 dersinden aldığınız not:.....

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

Zeynep Övdür Uğurlu was born in 1986, Düzce. She graduated from Düzce Arsal Anatolian High School in 2004. She studied English Language Teaching at Marmara University between the years 2004-2008. After she worked as an English teacher in a private kindergarten for a short time, she started to work in Hakime Erciyas School of Foreign Languages, Düzce University as an instructor in October 2008. She is still working in the same institution. She is interested in teaching English for young learners, English language education in tertiary level, and professional development.

Contact info:

e-mail: zeynepovdur@duzce.edu.tr

Telephone: (0380) 542 11 63 - 1992