



Academic Language Tasks in Discipline-Specific Courses: Insights from three English-Medium Instruction Universities*

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study sought to investigate how undergraduate learners enrolled in EMI programs perceive the frequency and difficulty level of the academic language tasks in English in discipline-specific courses and whether there is a correlation between the perceived difficulty and frequency levels of these tasks. **Research Methods:** The research population consisted of undergraduate learners from three English-medium instruction (EMI) universities in Turkey. Data were collected in the 2018-2019 academic year from 513 participants through a 28-

item Likert scale questionnaire, aiming to determine the frequency and difficulty level of academic language tasks learners engage in. For participant selection, convenience sampling was used. The participants were from three faculties: Business Administration, Education and Engineering. Data analysis was carried out quantitatively using SPSS. **Findings:** Findings showed that "listening to lectures and classmates" was the most frequently performed listening task, while "giving speeches, asking and answering questions in conferences" and "writing discipline-specific texts" were performed the least often. Regarding the difficulty level, the participants reported the highest difficulty with academic language tasks requiring deeper learning skills, such as interacting with the content of materials, synthesizing and making an interpretation in English.

Implications for Research and Practice: In the light of the findings obtained in this study, we recommend faculty members provide learners with more encounters with field-specific terminology and authentic situations besides encouraging them to move beyond surface learning in discipline-specific courses.

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Introduction

Regarding the transition to English medium instruction (EMI) at Higher Education (HE), the general consensus is that university learners have limited English proficiency to meet the cognitive challenges of EMI (Doitz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011). This statement holds largely true also for Turkey's context as learners point at their limited English proficiency among the main factors adding to the challenge of EMI (Ekoc, 2020; Eser & Dikilitas, 2017; Kirkgoz, 2014). To improve the situation, Carkin (2005) highlights the importance of understanding the stakeholders' perceptions and evaluations, particularly those of learners. Based on this approach, this study adopts quantitative means to explore how undergraduate learners perceive the frequency and difficulty of academic language tasks (ALT) they have to complete using English over the course of their university education.

English for Academic Purposes

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is basically defined as 'teaching English specifically to facilitate learners' study or research through the medium of English (Hamp-Lyons, 2011, p. 89). Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002) designate the borders of EAP as language instruction addressing 'the specific communicative needs and practices of particular groups in academic contexts' (p. 2). Hamp-Lyons (2011) questions where to position EAP and states that people treating EAP as a subfield of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) are as right as people researching it in relation to English Language Teaching (ELT) or viewing it as a separate branch within language education. Doing so, she acknowledges that the field is quite inclusive and encompasses a wide range of research from in-class practices, such as teaching methodology or language assessment to needs analysis and the socio-politics of English in academic uses. Unsettled scope of the concept is also confirmed by a British Council report (2015), where EAP is described as a sub-branch of English Language Teaching (ELT). Within the scope of the courses offered under EAP, however, the focus is on English either for general or specific academic purposes.

With a background of nearly 50-year research, EAP keeps its vitality and stands as an area of particular importance thanks to the real, concrete and large scale needs of a big population of learners who study their major via English, which is the language of HE in Europe, America and increasingly in the other parts of the world along with Asia (Coleman, 2006; Doitz et al., 2011; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). The main drives prioritizing English as the language of HE are mostly explained via two intertwined concepts: globalization and English as Lingua Franca (ELF). Globalization has led the way for a highly interconnected world where it is certain that one needs to speak English to function effectively in any given area (Coleman, 2006; Mufwene, 2010). Therefore, English has gained multi-functional and deeply-rooted status around the world as ELF. As a British Council report (2018) strikingly summarizes:

'English is many things: It is the ultimate connecting language for business; the vehicle for some of the finest literature in the world; a door-opener for British

software; and the source of a thriving culture and education sector within the UK and beyond' (p. 5).

In a parallel fashion, HE has also built on the concept of internationalization more and more, which in turn requires and guarantees the use of English as the medium of instruction (Coleman, 2006; De Wit, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2011). Thanks to the consolidated power English has also gained in tertiary education, EAP has attained overwhelming importance. Coleman (2006) briefly summarizes this reciprocal relation between English and HE as follows: 'while the global status of English impels its adoption in HE, the adoption of English in HE further advances its global influence' (p. 4).

EAP Research in EMI Contexts in Turkey

In Turkey, the roots of shifting to EMI in HE dates back to the foundations of Bogazici University and later of METU (British Council Report 2015; Kirkgoz, 2009). With the dominance of English as the language of disseminating knowledge (Short, Boniche, Kim & Li, 2001), Turkey has also been influenced by the global endeavour of equipping individuals with English competency. Today, along with universities that offer degrees only in Turkish, there is a surge of HE programs that claim to teach their course content all in English or at least partially in English. This has brought a range of studies evaluating the EAP endeavor in Turkey with different foci: university lecturers' attitudes towards EMI in Turkey (Basibek et al., 2014; Kilickaya, 2006); teachers' and/or learners' motivation and perceptions of EAP needs (Ekoc, 2020; Kirkgoz, 2005, 2009, 2014); collaborative teaching of content and EFL teacher in EMI contexts (Macaro, Akincioglu, & Dearden, 2016); skill-based investigation of learners' EAP needs (Altinmakas & Bayyurt, 2019; Eser & Dikilitas, 2017; Nergis, 2013); learners' and lecturers' expectations from EAP courses (Cosaner, 2013; Yurekli, 2012); or department based English proficiency needs (Ekici, 2003; Kazar & Mede, 2015; Onder-Ozdemir, 2014).

Although Turkey has been striving for equipping undergraduates with a sound proficiency in English, it still ranks lower in this area among the European countries. A recent report published by the British Council (2015) with a focus on the quality of English instruction in Turkey has highlighted several deficits. The main problem is that Turkey is prioritizing the quantity of HE institutions rather than the quality. The existing literature about the Turkish context has also pointed at several reasons underlying the degrading educational quality in English. First, EMI education lacks quality because lecturers are not qualified enough to teach their subjects in English due to their low English proficiency (Ekoc, 2020). Second, EMI academics tend to focus on teaching just content and avoid responsibility in improving their learners' language skills (Altinmakas & Bayyurt, 2019; Macaro et al., 2016). Next, many learners do not feel proficient enough either to grasp the details of educational content in English or to display their content knowledge sufficiently using English (Basibek et al., 2014; Cosaner, 2013; Ekoc, 2020; Kirkgoz, 2014; Macaro et al., 2016). As practitioners of

English language teaching in Turkey, we believe that all these factors keep their presence and validity today. This observation has motivated us to keep searching for areas that require immediate attention in EMI universities. We have narrowed our focus to ALTs learners get involved in during EMI instruction as it is also an important part of the local gap in Turkey. British Council report (2015) points at this local gap as follows: ‘There is clearly a need for an analysis of what English language tasks are actually required on undergraduate EMI programs’ (p. 57). This report highlights the importance of hearing learners’ voices and of aligning the educational process, including English preparatory programs, with their expectations. In our study, EAP refers solely to the ALTs learners perform in undergraduate courses (hereinafter referred to as discipline-specific courses) offered by faculty members (hereinafter referred to as faculty) in EMI contexts. Therefore, ALTs in this study should not be confused with tasks performed in Academic Writing and Academic Presentation Skills courses (usually referred to as EAP courses) offered by English Language lecturers at the foreign languages departments. As such, this study aims to investigate how undergraduates enrolled in EMI programs perceive the frequency and difficulty level of the ALTs in four language skills in English and whether there is a correlation between the perceived difficulty and frequency levels of these tasks by posing the following research questions.

1. What do learners think about the frequency and difficulty level of ALTs related to four language skills?
 - a. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceived frequency and difficulty level of ALTs related to four language skills by faculties of learners?
2. Is there a correlation between the perceived difficulty and frequency levels of ALTs related to four language skills?

Method

Research Design

This research was designed as a descriptive study collecting quantitative data through a survey. After the survey was prepared and piloted, it was administered to collect information from the research participants to describe their opinions on the frequency and difficulty level of ALTs related to four language skills. For the analysis, SPSS 22.00 was employed.

Research Sample

This research was conducted with 513 university students (42.7% male, 57.3% female) enrolled at one state, two private EMI universities located in the central Anatolia region of Turkey. The participants were either between the ages of 17-20 (55.9%) or 21-24 (44.1%). Since it was difficult to select a random sample, convenience sampling was used in the selection of the participants. The sample of this study had two merits: first, they were chosen as they were available in the institutions where the

researchers of this study worked. Thus, they were within reach for data collection. Second and more importantly, they were representative of this research's focus as learners were enrolled at EMI universities and completing all ALTs in English. The sample was reached from three different faculties, namely Education (45.4%), Business Administration (32.7%) and Engineering (21.8%). As such, they were the participants to provide the data needed in this study, which is an important factor to achieve population generalizability (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). The participants were informed about the voluntary nature of this study by the researchers before the data collection, and further their consent was taken in written form using the questionnaires they were given.

Research Instruments and Procedures

As the research instruments in this study, we employed a questionnaire consisting of three parts: (1) collecting background information, (2) asking the participants' to state how frequently they perform ALTs in four language skills, (3) asking the participants' to state how difficult they consider ALTs in four language skills to be. The process we have gone through in structuring the survey has been proceduralised in Figure 1.

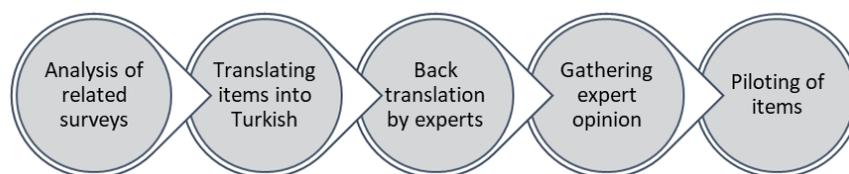


Figure 1. *Designing the Survey*

Accordingly, first, surveys used in the studies conducted to determine the range of ALTs HE learners engage in (Akyel & Ozek, 2010; Liu, Chang, Yang, & Sun, 2011; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008) were analysed and the suitable items to our context were detected. An analysis of the literature review (Helmer, 2013; Shing & Sim, 2011) also helped us write additional items. Then, items were translated into Turkish so that learners could better understand and respond to the items written in their native language. The researchers individually translated all the items into Turkish and later discussed to determine the best translation. Next, three experts in the field of ELT were consulted for back translation. Based on their comments, the items were modified. Three other experts (one in measurement and evaluation, one in the Turkish Language, and one in ELT) were further contacted. Items were modified once more, taking their comments into consideration. Finally, the survey was piloted with 10 learners enrolled in an EMI state university which was not among the participant universities, and final modifications were made.

The final survey consisted of two sections and 28 items. Section A included items

requesting demographic information. Section B had items related to ALTs in four language skills performed in undergraduate courses. Items in Section B were graded in two parts. Participants were first required to state how frequently they used each item, and then they ranked each item's difficulty level. Frequencies were ranked on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often), and the item difficulty level was ranked on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Not difficult at all) to 4 (Very difficult). Listening was measured by 6 items, speaking by 9 items, reading by 6 items, and writing by 7 items. The Cronbach's alpha of .87 was found for the reliability coefficient of the whole survey, indicating that the survey is valid and reliable.

Ethics committee approval and informed consent of the participants were obtained before data collection. Ethics committee approval of this research was taken from Social Sciences University of Ankara, Social Sciences and Humanities Research and Publication Ethics Committee with 03.04.2019 date and 2019/04 number. The questionnaire was given to the participants during class time by the researchers who explained the aim of this study, and answered further questions, if any, of the participants.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse and interpret the results in this study. Data were analysed through SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used for frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference among groups regarding their perceptions of ALTs in four language skills. Before the ANOVA test, there were some assumptions to be fulfilled: (1) normally distributed data, (2) homogeneity of variances and (3) independence of subjects. The researchers ensured that the observations were sampled independently of each other. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the perceived frequency and difficulty level of ALTs.

Results

Learners' Perceptions about the Frequency Level of ALTs related to four Language Skills

To measure the perceived frequency and difficulty level of ALTs, a general score for each scale was calculated, taking the average of the scores of the items in a given scale. To obtain a reliable result, each missing value was replaced by a score identified as the closest to the median score. Later, to rank the four skills in terms of frequency and difficulty, the average scores and standard deviations were calculated, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1*The Average Scores for the Perceived Frequency and Difficulty of four Language Skills*

	N	Frequency				Difficulty			
		Min.	Max.	M	SD	Min.	Max.	M	SD
L	473	1.67	5.00	3.65	.73	1.00	3.67	1.73	.55
S	473	1.22	5.00	3.15	.83	1.00	4.00	1.95	.63
R	473	1.00	5.00	3.24	.97	1.00	4.00	2.01	.67
W	473	1.00	5.00	3.35	.97	1.00	4.00	2.05	.69

Note¹: Responses of participants who did not fill in one of the two parts in the survey were omitted, and responses of 473 participants out of 513 were taken into account.

*L= Listening, S= Speaking, R= Reading, W= Writing

Results in Table 1 display the frequency and difficulty level of each language skill. Accordingly, the most frequently used skill is listening (M=3.65, SD=0.73) followed by writing (M=3.35, SD=0.97), reading (M=3.24, SD=0.97), and speaking (M=3.15, SD=0.83). Concerning difficulty, the most challenging language skill is writing (M=2.05, SD=0.69). Following writing, participants reported having difficulty in reading (M=2.01, SD=0.67) and speaking (M=1.95, SD=0.63), respectively, while listening (M=1.73, SD=0.55) was ranked to be the least challenging skill. Means and standard deviations of perceived frequency and difficulty of items in four language skills are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations of Perceived Frequency and Difficulty of Items in four Language Skills

Case Summaries						
Items	N	Frequency		Difficulty		
		M	SD	M	SD	
L1	Listening to conversations on general topics in class	473	3.90	.96	1.73	.74
L2	Listening to conversations about my major outside class (podcasts, videos, recorded conversations about my major)	473	3.53	1.15	1.85	.78
L3	Taking lecture notes	473	3.58	1.31	1.84	.85
L4	Following the press, listening to news	473	3.05	1.28	1.98	.87
L5	Listening to in-class presentations	473	3.89	1.09	1.53	.77
L6	Listening to my teachers and classmates in and outside class	473	3.96	1.08	1.48	.71
S1	Participating in class discussions	473	3.07	1.20	1.87	.86
S2	Asking and answering questions in class	473	3.29	1.16	1.82	.84
S3	Speaking with my teachers about the course in and outside class	473	3.12	1.23	1.61	.82
S4	Speaking with my classmates	473	3.29	1.35	1.45	.77
S5	Giving speeches, asking and answering questions in conferences and seminars	473	2.15	1.17	2.49	1.05
S6	Speaking with experts and/or native speakers in real situations (e.g., job interviews and responding to surveys)	473	2.93	1.24	2.15	.93
S7	Delivering in-class presentations	473	3.75	1.16	2.04	.91
S8	Explaining the information contained in texts in my own words	473	3.61	1.12	1.93	.83
S9	Presenting a critical synthesis of information gathered from different sources	473	3.22	1.31	2.25	1.02
R1	Reading texts and books about my major	473	3.33	1.19	2.05	.83
R2	Reading articles from newspapers/journals about my major	473	3.02	1.24	2.03	.84
R3	Reading reports and summaries	473	3.04	1.24	2.01	.84
R4	Reading about the terminology about my major	473	3.08	1.32	2.22	.92
R5	Following English newspapers, magazines and websites	473	3.51	1.24	1.77	.79
R6	Making inferences about and synthesizing what I read	473	3.48	1.22	1.98	.84
W1	Taking notes from texts/books	473	3.37	1.33	1.80	.83
W2	Summarizing the information in a text	473	3.50	1.24	1.81	.81
W3	Explaining the information contained in texts in my own words	473	3.54	1.24	1.90	.90
W4	Writing a critical synthesis of information gathered from different sources	473	3.09	1.31	2.23	.96
W5	Writing articles and literature reviews about my major	473	2.58	1.35	2.51	1.01
W6	Responding to open-ended exam questions	473	3.73	1.21	1.96	.87
W7	Writing term papers	473	3.69	1.24	2.18	.92

*L= Listening, S= Speaking, R= Reading, W= Writing

As seen in Table 2, participants used the listening skill most frequently to perform the activity in item 6 “Listening to my teachers and classmates in and outside class” (M=3.96, SD=1.08), and the least frequently used item was found to be item 4 “Following the press, listening to the news” (M=3.05, SD=1.28). As for the speaking skill, item 7, “Delivering in-class presentations” (M=3.75, SD=1.16) and item 8, “Explaining the information contained in texts in my own words” (M=3.61, SD=1.12), were reported to be the activities most frequently performed, whereas item 5 “Giving speeches, asking and answering questions in conferences and seminars” (M=2.12, SD=1.18) was the least frequent. With regard to reading, activities in item 5 “Following English newspapers, magazines and websites” (M=3.51, SD=1.24) and 6 “Making inferences about and synthesizing what I read” (M=3.48, SD=1.22) were the most frequent, and item 2 “Reading articles from newspapers/journals about my major” was found to be least frequent (M=3.02, SD=1.24). Participants also reported to use the writing skill mostly to perform activities in item 6 “Responding to open-ended exam questions” (M=3.73, SD=1.21) and 7 “Writing term papers” (M=3.69, SD=1.24), whereas item 5 “Writing articles and literature reviews about my major” (M=2.58, SD=1.36) was the least frequent.

Regarding the difficulty in listening, participants found item 4 “Following the press, listening to the news” (M=1.98, SD=0.87) to be most challenging, and item 6 “Listening to my teachers and classmates in and outside class” (M=1.48, SD=0.71) was perceived to be the least difficult item. As for speaking, item 5 “Giving speeches, asking and answering questions in conferences and seminars” (M=2.49, SD=1.05) and 9 “Presenting a critical synthesis of information gathered from different sources” (M=2.25, SD=1.02) were considered as difficult to perform. Participants reported it was easy for them to perform item 4 “Speaking with my classmates” (M=1.45, SD=0.77). With regard to reading, item 4 “Reading about the terminology related to my major” (M=2.22, SD=0.92) and 1 “Reading texts and books about my major” (M=2.05, SD=0.84) were found difficult, while item 5 “Following English newspapers, magazines and websites” (M=1.77, SD=0.80) was considered easy. Lastly, participants reported performing writing-related activities as stated in items 5 “Writing articles and literature reviews about my major” (M=2.51, SD=1.01) and 4 “Writing a critical synthesis of information gathered from different sources” (M=2.23, SD=0.97) challenged them. However, they could carry out activities in item 1 “Taking notes from texts/books” (M=1.80, SD=0.84) and 2 (M=1.81, SD=0.81), with more ease.

Is there a Statistically Significant Difference on the Perceived Frequency Level of ALTs Related to four Language Skills by Faculties of Learners?

To find out whether faculty acts as a significant variable in the perceived frequency level of ALTs, ANOVA test was run on the data. Shapiro-Wilk (SW) test was performed to determine the normal distribution of data in relation to ALTs in four language skills by faculties of learners. SW test demonstrated the groups were normally distributed (All $p > 0.011$. $\alpha = 0.01$). The test for homogeneity of variance was not significant, indicating that the assumption underlying the application of ANOVA was met (All $p > 0.188$. $\alpha = 0.01$). An analysis of variance indicated that the effects of faculty on the perceived frequency of ALTs in four language skills was significant ($f_L=15.003$, $f_S= 18.800$, $f_R=10.802$ and $f_W=39.744$. All $p < 0.001$. $\alpha = 0.05$). Post hoc

comparisons using the Hochberg's GT2 test were run to find out which group's means were different, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Hochberg's GT2 post-hoc Test for Multiple Comparisons of four Language Skills by Faculties

	Comparison		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Listening	Educ.	B.A.	.29*	.08	<.001	.11	.48
	Educ.	Eng.	.42*	.08	<.001	.22	.62
	B.A.	Eng.	.13	.09	.39	-.09	.34
Speaking	Educ.	B.A.	.48*	.09	<.001	.27	.69
	Educ.	Eng.	.43*	.09	<.001	.21	.66
	B.A.	Eng.	-.05	.10	.96	-.29	.20
Reading	Educ.	B.A.	.43*	.10	<.001	.18	.67
	Educ.	Eng.	.39*	.11	.001	.13	.66
	B.A.	Eng.	-.04	.12	.99	-.32	.25
Writing	Educ.	B.A.	.60*	.10	<.001	.36	.83
	Educ.	Eng.	.87*	.11	<.001	.62	1.13
	B.A.	Eng.	.28*	.11	.04	.01	.55

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

As indicated in Table 3, learners at the Faculty of Education use all four skills more frequently than the learners at the other faculties. Test results revealed that the learners from the Faculty of Business Administration used listening, speaking and reading skills as much frequently as the Engineering learners. Business Administration learners were found to use the writing skill more frequently than the Engineering learners.

Is there a Statistically Significant Difference on the Perceived Difficulty Level of ALTs related to four Language Skills by Faculties of Learners?

To find out whether faculty acts as a significant variable in the perceived difficulty level of ALTs, an ANOVA test was run on the data. Before ANOVA, assumptions of the test were checked. Shapiro-Wilk (SW) test was performed to determine the normal distribution of data in relation to ALTs in four language skills by faculties of learners. SW test demonstrated the groups were not normally distributed. As the assumptions were not met for normal distribution of data, non-parametric equivalent of ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis H test was used instead. ($\chi^2_L=11.905$, $\chi^2_S= 4.549$, $\chi^2_R=14.949$ and $\chi^2_W=11.567$. $p_L=0.003$, $p_S=0.103$, $p_R=0.001$ and $p_W=0.003$. $\alpha = 0.05$).

An analysis of variance showed that the effects of faculty on the perceived difficulty of ALTs in listening, reading and writing were significant. Post hoc

comparisons using the Dunn’s post hoc test was run to find out which group’s means were different, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Dunn’s Post-hoc Test for Multiple Comparisons of four Language Skills by Faculties

	Comparison		Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Listening	Educ.	B.A.	-50.118	14.615	-3.429	.001	.002*
	Educ.	Eng.	-26.140	15.768	-1.658	.097	.292
	B.A.	Eng.	-23.978	16.936	-1.416	.157	.470
Reading	Educ.	B.A.	-55.604	14.611	-3.806	<.001	<.001*
	Educ.	Eng.	-32.793	15.764	-2.080	.038	.113
	B.A.	Eng.	-22.811	16.931	-1.347	.178	.534
Writing	Educ.	B.A.	-46.266	14.640	-3.160	.002	.005*
	Educ.	Eng.	-37.351	15.795	-2.365	.018	.054
	B.A.	Eng.	-8.915	16.964	-.526	.599	1.000

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level and significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

As indicated in Table 4, the participants from the Faculty of Education reported significantly lower difficulty level for the ALTs grouped under listening, reading and writing in comparison to the participants enrolled at the Faculty of Business Administration. No significant difference was found for other paired comparisons.

Is there a Correlation between the Perceived Difficulty and Frequency Levels of ALTs related to four Language Skills?

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the perceived frequency and difficulty level of ALTs. The results of Pearson Correlational analysis can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5

Pearson Correlational Analysis Results for Frequency and Difficulty Levels of four Language Skills

		Listening (Dif.)	Speaking (Dif.)	Reading (Dif.)	Writing (Dif.)
Listening (Freq.)	r	-.293	-.254	-.227	-.264
	sig	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Speaking (Freq.)	r	-.231	-.406	-.213	-.308
	sig	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Reading (Freq.)	r	-.266	-.226	-.288	-.293
	sig	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Writing (Freq.)	r	-.184	-.211	-.171	-.309
	Sig	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Table 5 shows the difficulty and frequency levels were negatively and significantly ($p < .001$) correlated for each language skill (i.e., the more frequently the participants reported completing ALTs in listening, the less difficult they perceived those tasks to have, or vice versa). A striking correlation was detected for speaking at a moderate level [$r = -.406$, $p < .001$] between the frequency and difficulty level of the scale.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to report on the undergraduate learners' perceptions of frequency and difficulty of ALTs performed in English in discipline-specific courses in three EMI universities. The participants were 513 learners from three faculties: Business Administration, Education, and Engineering. To collect data, a 28-item Likert scale questionnaire was formed after the analysis of the related surveys and piloting of the items were completed.

The findings indicate that listening is the most frequently used skill. Listening to lectures and classmates is the most frequently used ALT, followed by listening to general conversations and in-class presentations. This finding might imply two things. First, the learners in our study generally perform listening tasks requiring less active participation. Second, discipline-specific courses are generally delivered through lectures, or "monologues" (Lynch, 2011, p. 84), which may result in memorization and ineffective communication for learners (Dearden, 2015; Kirkgoz, 2014; Kyeyune, 2010; Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2018).

The findings also reveal the learners most frequently speak English to deliver in-class presentations, and write to respond to open-ended exam questions. They use the reading skill to follow English newspapers, magazines and websites. Further analysis of findings show that they neither give speeches, ask and answer questions in conferences, read journals about their major nor do they speak with experts or native

speakers in real situations. They seem to engage in productive ALTs only if it is a must to meet course requirements, but they do not use them in more authentic and challenging situations. However, the EAP curriculum should encourage learners to develop competence over communicative skills helping them survive in specific discourse communities (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002).

For listening, the most difficult task was to listen to the news, which is thought to be an activity highly relevant to Business Administration and Education Faculties. Regarding speaking, learners reported giving speeches, asking and answering questions in conferences and seminars as the most difficult task. Although this activity may seem irrelevant to learners, we find this task to be worthy of integrating into the faculty curriculum efficiently. It not only promotes learners' integration into their academic community but also encourages their critical thinking skills. Finally, among reading tasks, learners pointed out that reading about the terminology related to their major was the most difficult task. Writing a critical synthesis of information, articles and literature reviews about their major were considered the most difficult, as well, which accords with the findings of Altınmakas and Bayyurt (2019). They have noted that particularly first-year university students in their study report experiencing considerable difficulty expressing their content knowledge in L2, which requires high interpretative skills. The researchers attribute this problem to low-level writing instruction given in pre-university education. Considering all the tasks reported as the most difficult, we can conclude that learners more easily deal with ALTs that do not require much questioning or critical thinking. Similarly, Kirkgoz (2013) has found that the learners in EMI universities show a tendency towards surface learning although it is assumed that learning tasks at HE should encourage deep learning (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983; Haggis, 2003; Marshall & Case, 2005) where learners question, exemplify and synthesize. Further, the faculty's lack of adequate pedagogical skills might prevent them from giving proper consideration to deep learning in their courses. However, they are expected to train learners to use various strategies like imagining different situations, understanding rather than memorizing and internalizing information for deeper learning (Soruc, Dinler & Griffiths, 2018).

It is also worth discussing that neither in writing nor in reading and speaking tasks did the learners find themselves competent enough to use discipline-specific terminology in English. This might be due to their level of proficiency in English. In EMI universities in Turkey, all learners must attend a year-long English Preparatory Program (EPP) so that they can maintain their faculty courses effectively. However, most learners begin EPP from the beginner level and either the duration or the content of the program may not prepare them thoroughly for discipline-specific study in English at faculties (Erarslan, 2019; Kirkgoz, 2009; Ozkanal & Hakan, 2010).

Findings have evidenced that the learners from Education Faculty use ALTs in four skills more frequently than those from other faculties. Differences in student majors will obviously affect their level of engagement with academic language skills. It was also found that writing tasks were the least frequently used by the learners at the Faculty of Engineering. This finding is in line with that of Kirkgoz (2009), who found that engineering students relied on mathematical formulas instead of long written explanations during their departmental training. As Kirkgoz also does, we consider

promoting advanced academic writing skills in engineering highly important as writing empowers students to express their knowledge properly during their integration with their academic community via conferences or academic publications. However, this finding might also be interpreted as unsurprising if we hypothesize that in the engineering field, a visual mode of discourse might replace English as the international 'language of science' (Rowley-Jolivet, 2002, p. 38) and help learners avoid thinking much about lexis, syntax and phonology of English while speaking and writing.

We found that the learners from the Faculty of Business Administration reported higher difficulty levels in listening, writing, and reading. This might be attributed to learners' language proficiency. Deficiencies in language proficiency, when coupled with the terminology in discipline-specific courses, might pose challenges. We, therefore, need to support learners in certain skills as also brought forward by Mahdavi Zafarghandi, Khalili Sabet and Sharoudi Lamar (2014) who suggest that Business Administration learners need increasing support primarily with reading skill besides other language skills.

Lastly, we found negative and significant correlations between the level of frequency and difficulty of ALTs. The more frequently the tasks were performed, the less difficulty the learners had in performing them. Specifically for the speaking tasks, a negative and moderate level correlation was detected. Kim (2014) underlined that the role of EMI is a significant mediating factor influencing learners' motivation and speaking achievement. Thus, it is important to motivate and guide learners to enhance their speaking competence for simple and more complex situations by teaching and practice of oral communication strategies (Starfield, 2011).

We infer that EMI learners in our study are at ease with ALTs that do not pose much intellectual and academic challenge. Results evidenced learners do not often use field-specific terminology in English, particularly in more authentic situations. Most of the learners found writing and reading as the hardest skills, synthesizing information from field-specific texts in particular.

In light of the findings of the study, we first suggest learners to be provided with more field-specific materials, which can lead to more interactive and autonomous learning through more challenging tasks assigned inside and outside the classroom. Faculty must provide guidance and advice to learners about how to deal with subject-specific materials as well as involve them in encounters with more authentic situations like conferences, seminars, and meetings with field experts. To enhance competencies in communicative skills, faculty might advise their learners to keep writing and speaking portfolios through which they might become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and encourage them to self-regulate their learning. For speaking, there can be more opportunities for technology integration that might bring formal and informal authentic situations to the classroom like using blended learning, webinars, tele-conferencing, and live broadcasts. For listening, it is necessary to design lessons to encourage an interactive learning environment where learners ask questions, develop arguments about the content, take notes and discuss them with

peers. Furthermore, we suggest faculty involving more metacognitive strategy training in classes to help learners use language skills with less anxiety.

It is also important to mention the challenges faculty experience in EMI settings. Firstly, in some studies, it is discussed that faculty are challenged by the low proficiency levels of the learners, causing difficulties to deliver courses in a more advanced way (Ekoc, 2020; Kilickaya, 2006; Kirkgoz, 2009; Macaro et al., 2016). Secondly, they do not receive special training on how to teach content, thus suffering from lack of pedagogical knowledge (Dearden, Akincioglu & Macaro, 2016). We believe they should be equipped with special skills through mentoring, training and certification programs on how to teach. What is more, there is little or no interaction between the teachers who teach English for general purposes (EGP) and faculty in EMI universities (Dearden et al., 2016). EGP teachers need more information and support from faculty about the particular language needs of the learners in faculties so that they could design the courses accordingly. Faculty, on the other hand, do not know much about the language learning problems of their learners. To overcome this, we suggest having more open communication and interaction between EGP and faculty and more platforms where they can discuss and offer solutions to common and more specific problems in their learning environment.

This study is not without limitations. First, data were gathered from a relatively small sample size; therefore, our findings cannot be generalized to other groups of learners in other EMI settings. Secondly, the findings and discussions of this study were solely based on quantitative data collected from the learners. Therefore, all other main stakeholders' opinions can be received for better interpretation of the results by integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods using different data collection instruments in future studies.

Ethics Committee Approval

Ethics committee approval of this research was obtained from the Social Sciences University of Ankara, Social Sciences and Humanities Research and Publication Ethics Committee with 03.04.2019 date and 2019/04 number.

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Bölüm Derslerinde Kullanılan Akademik Amaçlı İngilizce Etkinlikleri: Eğitim Dili İngilizce Olan Üç Üniversiteden Yansımalar

Atıf:

Demirkol, T., Bayram, I., & Canaran, O. (2021). Academic language tasks in discipline-specific courses: Insights from three English-medium instruction universities. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research* 94,101-124, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2021.94.5

Özet

Problem Durumu: Akademik Amaçlı İngilizce, yükseköğretimde eğitimlerine devam eden öğrencilerin öğrenim ve araştırmalarını İngilizce yürütmelerini desteklemek amacıyla gerçekleştirilen tüm eğitim-öğretim faaliyetleri olarak tanımlanabilir. Yaklaşık 50 yıllık bir araştırma geçmişine sahip Akademik Amaçlı İngilizcenin önemi, dünyanın birçok bölgesinde eğitimciler ve alan uzmanları tarafından vurgulanmaktadır. Üniversite öğrencilerinin İngilizce yeterliklerini artırma konusunda gösterilen tüm çabalara rağmen, Türkiye'nin halen bu alanda Avrupa ülkeleri arasında alt sıralarda yer aldığı görülmektedir. Eğitim dili İngilizce olan üniversitelerde sunulan İngilizce eğitimi üzerine yapılan araştırmalar ve British Council (2015) tarafından Türkiye'de İngilizce eğitiminin niteliğine ilişkin değerlendirme raporu, üniversite öğrencilerinin İngilizce eğitim içeriğini kavrama ve öğrendiklerini İngilizceyi kullanarak aktarma konusunda yeterli olmadığına işaret etmektedir. Eğitim dili İngilizce olan üniversitelerde İngilizce eğitim kalitesinin düşük olmasının; akademisyenlerin İngilizce yeterlik düzeyleri, öğrenci ihtiyaçlarının göz ardı edilmesi, motivasyon sorunları, ders içeriklerinin hazırlanması ile ilgili problemler, öğrencilerin İngilizcelelerini geliştirmeleri konusunda akademisyenlerin sorumluluktan kaçınma eğiliminde olmaları şeklinde farklı etmenlere dayandırıldığı görülmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, British Council tarafından hazırlanan rapor, yükseköğretimde kullanılan akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerinin türleri ve etkinliklerle ilgili ihtiyaçların ortaya çıkarılması gerektiğinin de altını çizmektedir. Bu çalışmada, "akademik amaçlı İngilizce" ifadesi ile kastedilen Türkiye'de eğitim dili İngilizce olan üniversitelerde ders veren öğretim elemanları tarafından öğrencilere sunulan ve öğrencilerin sınıf içi ve dışında gerçekleştirdiği akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinlikleridir. Bu bağlamda, çalışmada Türkiye'de eğitim dili İngilizce olan üniversitelere kayıtlı lisans öğrencilerinin, akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerinin sıklık ve zorluk düzeylerini nasıl algıladıkları ve algılanan zorluk ve sıklık düzeyleri arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığı araştırılmaktadır. Çalışma aşağıdaki araştırma sorularına cevap aramaktadır:

1. Öğrencilerin İngilizce dört dil becerisine ilişkin gerçekleştirilen akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerinin sıklık ve zorluk seviyeleri ile ilgili düşünceleri nelerdir?
 - a. Akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerinin sıklık ve zorluk seviyesi ile ilgili öğrenci görüşleri arasında fakültelere göre anlamlı bir farklılık var mıdır?
2. Akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerinin sıklık ve zorluk seviyeleri arasında bir ilişki var mıdır?

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de eğitim dili İngilizce olan üç üniversiteye kayıtlı 513 lisans öğrencisinin, akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerinin sıklık ve zorluk düzeyine ilişkin görüşlerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Buna ek olarak, akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerinin sıklık ve zorluk düzeyine ilişkin öğrenci görüşlerinin, öğrencilerin fakültelerine göre - Eğitim Fakültesi, İşletme Fakültesi ve Mühendislik Fakültesi- farklılık gösterip göstermediği ve etkinliklerin sıklık ve zorluk düzeyleri arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığı da araştırılmaktadır.

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Betimsel bir analiz çalışması olarak desenlenen bu çalışmada veriler anket yolu ile toplanmıştır. Veriler Türkiye’de yer alan ve eğitim dili İngilizce olan biri devlet ikisi vakıf üniversitesi olmak üzere üç farklı üniversiteden toplanmıştır. Katılımcıların seçiminde kolay örneklem yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Katılımcıların kolay ulaşılabilir olmalarının yanı sıra akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinlikleri ile ilgili deneyime sahip olmaları da dikkate alınmıştır. Veri toplama aşamasından önce anketin pilot çalışması yapılmış, asıl uygulamada anketi 513 öğrenci yanıtlamıştır. Üç bölüm ve 28 maddeden oluşan ankette, katılımcılarla ilgili demografik bilgiler ile dört dil becerisinde gerçekleştirilen akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerinin sıklık ve zorluk düzeylerine ilişkin likert tipi maddeler yer almaktadır. Dinleme becerisine ilişkin etkinlikler 6, konuşma becerisine ilişkin etkinlikler 9, okuma becerisine ilişkin etkinlikler 6, ve yazma becerisine ilişkin etkinlikler ise 7 madde ile ölçülmüştür. Anketin Cronbach Alpha değeri .87’dir.

Verilerin analizinde betimsel ve çıkarımsal istatistiksel analizlerden yararlanılmıştır. Araştırma sorularına yüzde, ortalama ve standart sapma gibi betimsel istatistiklerin yanı sıra, ANOVA ve Pearson korelasyon analizi kullanılarak yanıt aranmıştır.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Araştırmanın sonuçları en sık kullanılan becerilerin sırasıyla dinleme, yazma, okuma ve konuşma olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. İlgili becerilerin en sık kullanıldığı durumların “ders içi ve dışında öğretmenlerini ve sınıf arkadaşlarını dinlemek”, “sınavlarda açık uçlu sorulara yanıt vermek”, “İngilizce haberleri, web sitelerini, dergileri okumak”, ve “derste sunum yapmak” olduğu görülmüştür. Öğrenciler en çok zorlandıkları becerilerin sırasıyla yazma, okuma, konuşma ve dinleme olduğunu belirtmiştir. İlgili becerilere ilişkin en zorlayıcı etkinliklerin “bölümümle ilgili makale ve alan yazın incelemesi yazmak” “bölümümle ilgili terminoloji içeren parçaları okumak”, “konferans ya da seminerlerde konuşma yapmak, soru sormak, cevaplamak”, ve “basında çıkan haberleri dinlemek” olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır.

Dört dil becerisine ilişkin akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerinin algılanan sıklık ve zorluk düzeylerinde katılımcıların fakültelerine göre bir farklılık olup olmadığı araştırılmış ve aşağıdaki sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır.

Eğitim Fakültesindeki katılımcılar dört dil becerisine ilişkin etkinlikleri diğer fakültelerdeki katılımcılara kıyasla daha sık kullanmaktadır. İşletme ve Mühendislik Fakültesindeki katılımcılar dinleme, konuşma ve okuma becerilerini ilişkin etkinlikleri aynı sıklıkta kullanmaktadır. İşletme Fakültesindeki katılımcılar yazma becerisine

ilişkin etkinlikleri Mühendislik Fakültesindeki katılımcılara oranla daha sık kullanmaktadır.

Eğitim Fakültesindeki katılımcılar dinleme, okuma ve yazma becerilerine ilişkin etkinlikleri İşletme Fakültesindeki katılımcılara kıyasla daha az zorlayıcı bulmaktadır. Diğer fakültelelere ilişkin anlamlı bir fark tespit edilmemiştir.

Dört dil becerisine ilişkin akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerinin algılanan sıklık ve zorluk düzeylerinde bir ilişki olup olmadığı araştırılmış ve her dil becerisi için sıklık ve zorluk düzeylerinde negatif ve anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Özellikle dinleme becerisinin sıklık ve zorluk düzeylerinde orta seviyede anlamlı bir fark olduğu görülmüştür.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri: Araştırmanın sonuçları, lisans derslerinde öğrenciler tarafından en sık kullanılan dinleme etkinliğinin “ders içi ve dışında öğretmenlerini ve sınıf arkadaşlarını dinlemek” olduğunu göstermiştir. “Konferanslarda soru sormak ve cevaplamak ve alana özgü yazı yazmak” etkinliği ise en az kullanılan konuşma ve yazma etkinlikleridir. “Alana özgü materyallerin içeriğini anlamak, sentez yapmak ve yorumlamak” gibi daha ileri dil ve derin düşünme becerileri gerektiren etkinliklerin ise öğrencilerin en fazla zorluk yaşadığı etkinlikler olduğu belirlenmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları ışığında, öğretim elemanlarının İngilizce dört dil becerisine yönelik etkinlik seçimlerinde, alana özgü terminolojiyi içeren kaynakları daha fazla kullanmaları ve ders içinde ve ders sonrasında öğrencilerin mesleğe yönelik gerçek hayata ilişkin durumlarla karşılaşmalarına imkân sağlayacak ortamlar yaratmaları önerilmektedir. Buna ek olarak, öğrencileri yüzeysel öğrenmenin ötesine geçmeye teşvik edecek etkinliklerin tasarlanması da gerekmektedir. Ders sırasında veya sonrasında kullanılan akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinlikleri aracılığıyla, öğrenciler arası İngilizce etkileşimin artırılması ve özerk öğrenmeye imkân sunan ortamların oluşturulmasına ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Ayrıca, alana özgü güncel kaynakları nasıl kullanacakları ve çalışacakları konusunda da öğrencilere rehberlik edilmelidir. İngilizce konferans, seminer ve alan uzmanlarıyla yapılan toplantılara katılım konusunda öğrenciler teşvik edilmelidir. İngilizce dil becerilerinin gelişimini desteklemek amacıyla, harmanlanmış öğrenme, çevrim içi seminerler, canlı yayınlar vb. imkânlarla öğrencileri buluşturabilecek teknolojilerin kullanılması gerekmektedir. Öğrencilerin akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinliklerini kaygı duymadan gerçekleştirmelerine yardımcı olmak için üst bilişsel düşünme becerilerini geliştirmeye yönelik eğitimlerin verilmesi de araştırmanın önerileri arasında bulunmaktadır.

Eğitim Fakültesindeki öğrencilerin dört dil becerisinde yer alan etkinlikleri diğer fakültelerdeki öğrencilerden daha sık kullandıkları, Mühendislik Fakültesindeki öğrencilerin ise en az kullandıkları etkinliklerin yazma becerisine ilişkin olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu durum öğrencilerin eğitim gördükleri disiplin farklılıkları ve bu disiplinin gerektirdiği akademik faaliyetlerin türü ile ilişkilendirilebilir. Mühendislik öğrencilerinin eğitimlerinin uzun yazılı açıklamalardansa matematik formülleri odağında şekillendiği araştırmacılar tarafından sıklıkla dile getirilmektedir.

İşletme Fakültesindeki öğrencilerin dinleme, yazma ve okuma becerilerine ilişkin etkinliklerde diğer fakültelerle kıyaslandığında daha çok zorlandıkları görülmüştür. Bu durum öğrencilerin dil yeterlikleri ile açıklanabilir. Dil yeterliğindeki eksiklikler bölümle ilgili terminolojinin yoğun olduğu derslerin gereklilikleriyle birleşince öğrenciler için daha da zorlayıcı olabilir. Araştırmalar İşletme fakültesinde eğitim gören öğrencilerin başta okuma becerisi olmak üzere diğer becerilerde desteğe ihtiyaç duyduklarını belirtmektedir.

Öğrencilerin etkinlikleri gerçekleştirme sıklıkları ile zorluk arasında –özellikle dinleme becerisinde- negatif bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Diğer bir ifadeyle bir etkinlik ne kadar sık gerçekleştirilirse, o kadar az zorlayıcı bulunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, öğrencilerin dört dil becerisine ilişkin etkinlikleri gerçekleştirmelerine olanak tanıyacak fırsatlar yaratılması oldukça önemlidir. Öğretim elemanlarının desteği, ders içeriklerinin yeniden düzenlenmesi, ders dışı etkinliklerin artırılması gibi önlemlerle öğrenciler desteklenebilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Akademik amaçlı İngilizce etkinlikleri, zorluk, sıklık, eğitim dili olarak İngilizce, lisans öğrencileri.

