

Review research paper

WHAT DO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION UNIVERSITIES TELL US ABOUT EAP COURSES?

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Abstract. *This study aims to understand whether EMI students considered EAP courses as helpful in promoting their academic achievement and to unearth their ideas about the qualities of an ideal EAP course. Data were collected from 563 undergraduate students enrolled at three EMI universities in Turkey. Results indicated that students found EAP courses effective in enabling them to improve their academic skills, academic language and content knowledge, and provide them with personal benefits. However, students expressed their dissatisfaction with EAP course designs and their improvement level of speaking, vocabulary, reading and writing. EMI students suggest that an ideal EAP course should be conducted 2 or 3 hours a week either by faculty members or English instructors. The expectations that EMI students mentioned in this study point at the need for a skills-based EAP course design for which they also pinpointed several essential sub-skills to be covered. The study concludes with a discussion of challenges encountered by EMI students and some recommendations for the improvement of EAP courses.*

Key words: *English medium instruction, English for academic purposes, course design, skills-based activities*

1. INTRODUCTION

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is defined as a variety of English for specific purposes (ESP) which refers to “language research and instruction that focuses on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular social groups” (Hyland 2007, 391). EAP is treated as a ‘sub-discipline of ESP’ in that it relates to social groups within academic pursuit (Hamp-Lyons 2011, 89) and can be defined as ‘the teaching of English with the specific aim of helping learners to study, conduct research in English’ (Flowerdew and Peacock 2001, 8). EAP research maintains its strong position around the world thanks to the increasing internationalization of higher education (HE) which have brought with it the concept of English medium instruction (EMI) where learners take their education in English rather than the first language of the home country (Chapple 2015; Dearden 2015). Especially in developing and developed countries, EMI is being

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promoted for several benefits it offers: attracting international learners to study in the same environment (Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra 2013; Baker and Fang 2021); enabling learners to function in the global market upon graduation (Wilkinson 2012) and raising students' career expectations (Başibek et al. 2014); and maximizing learners' exposure to English (Graham-Marr 2017; Yang 2015) as the use of English takes place in an authentic environment (Anthony 2018). With all these advantages, EMI appears to be a nascent concept evidently penetrating into Turkish HE system (Aslan 2018; Selvi 2014) where there are alternative approaches to the language of instruction: a) solely Turkish education; b) mixed-medium education in Turkish and English (at least 30% in English); c) EMI (Macaro and Akincioglu 2018), which will be the option on the upswing for the coming years (Dearden 2015; Aslan 2018).

1.1. EAP for EMI Students

Among a range of factors to influence EMI trend, language proficiency of HE students is the most commonly discussed issue as it plays a pivotal role in the implementation and the quality of EMI (Bradford 2016). Though the boundaries of sufficient level of language proficiency are blurred, existing research suggests that language proficiency of students to embark on EMI context is decisive in the quality of education as well as the amount students benefit from EMI (Aizawa & Rose, 2020; Bradford 2016; Chapple 2015; Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra 2013; Evans and Green 2007). Though many -including students- share the expectation that EMI would improve students' language proficiency (Chapple 2015; Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra 2013; Kirkpatrick 2014), there are no clear guidelines about how to achieve this kind of improvement. Still, it is safe to assume that in order to achieve their full potential in EMI contexts, students need specialized language support tailored to their academic needs in their majors (Chapple 2015, 5; Chang, Kim, and Lee 2017).

In order to provide this academic language support, generally EAP courses are integrated into EMI programs, though the design and content of these courses do not follow a standard approach (Dooley 2010). In the UK, EAP courses are initially planned as pre-sessional intensive courses prior to students' departmental studies to ensure that they start regular semesters as equipped with fundamental academic-study skills such as note-taking in academic reading and listening (Strong 2019, 4). In Japan, EAP courses in EMI programs are optional for freshmen and they provide a basic academic skills repertoire, mostly decided by course teachers in charge (Fujimato-Adamson and Adamson 2018). In Australia, for equipping students for EMI programs, a growing practice is to give them a one-semester compulsory course named English Language Bridging Course, which prepares them for academic studies and acts as the gatekeeper for students to start tertiary study. EMI practices in Turkey also act in line with the assumption that students need academic language support and many EMI programs offer EAP courses along with other content courses. However, EAP practices in the Turkish context significantly differ from each other (Demir 2015; Kamasak, Sahan, and Rose 2021; Kırkgoz 2009; Saglam and Duman 2020; Yurekli 2012), which holds true also for the sampling of this study, as can be appreciated from Appendix 1.

Kırkgoz (2009) conducted one of the earliest studies on EAP courses offered in the Turkish HE. The researcher investigated the effectiveness of a one-year EAP course from the lens of first-year students enrolled in EMI programs along with the evaluation of

faculty. Kırkgoz reported that most of the students found that EAP course ineffective in preparing them to meet the demands of academic tasks at their departments, an observation also confirmed by the lecturers interviewed. The researcher, who attributed the inadequacy of that EAP course to the skill-integrated curriculum that addressed language skills only superficially, suggested adding a deep focus into standard EAP courses so that learners could get familiar with question types, text types and vocabulary special to their majors.

Yurekli (2012) described the evaluation of an EAP course content offered to students enrolled in programs of Computer Sciences Faculty. The researcher conducted a needs analysis survey and held interviews with faculty. The findings of the study were encouraging in that students expressed their satisfaction with the content of the EAP course that addressed their academic reading and writing skills thoroughly. However, they expressed their concern about speaking and listening as underdeveloped areas. As such, Yurekli made a call for developing comprehensive EAP courses targeting each major language skill rather than with a limited focus on one or two specific skills.

Demir (2015) explored the needs of university students and academics in relation to a specific EAP course titled Professional Communication Skills. Different from Yurekli's (2012) study, this EAP course targeted the improvement of all language skills. Though the academics and a significant majority of the students reported that the EAP course contributed to their development, there were criticisms targeted at the unbalanced importance attached to different language skills, where speaking and writing were reported to be not receiving sufficient attention.

Another study on EAP courses targeting a specific skill was conducted by Gokturk Saglam and Yalcin Duman (2020) who explored the effectiveness of an EAP course offered to Turkish university students to improve their academic reading and writing skills. The researcher narrowed the study's focus on the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of source-based writing tasks where they produced academic written tasks in relation to the academic texts they read. The study suggested that provision of academic reading texts enhanced the participants' satisfaction of the quality of arguments they produced in their writings. Additionally, they reported utilizing those reading texts as sources modelling linguistic use.

Aforementioned studies show that though the focus of EAP courses offered in different contexts may change considerably, they all imply that EAP courses should be academic-oriented and each language skill requires special attention in the course design. This study will contribute to the existing literature by adopting a learner-centred approach. It aims to investigate both how useful EMI students find EAP courses for their subject courses and what are the ideal design features of an EAP course from EMI students' perspectives, which is an area that has not been addressed in the Turkish context.

2. METHOD

This study aimed to understand whether EMI students considered their current EAP courses to be helpful in promoting their academic achievement and to unearth their ideas about the qualities of an ideal EAP course. An EAP course in this study refers to any specifically designed course providing academic-oriented language support for HE students as a component of their departmental curriculum. To balance the possible

limitations of quantitative and qualitative methods, we used mixed methods study design (Bryman 2006). We specifically preferred to use the convergent parallel design and collected both quantitative and qualitative data synchronously.

2.1. Data Collection

2.1.1. Quantitative Data

Our quantitative data came from undergraduate students from three different Turkish EMI universities (University A, B and C). Data were collected from 563 students chosen by convenience sampling in the spring of 2019. 56.5% (318) of study participants were female, and 43.5% (245) were male. Their ages ranged from 17-20 (56.7%) to 21-24 (40.1%). Only 3.2% of them were at the age of 25 and above. Most students were freshmen (380; 67.5%), followed by second graders (153; 27.2%) and third graders (26; 4.6%). Only four students (0.7%) were seniors. Students were enrolled at five different faculties; education (185; 32.9%), business administration (106; 18.8%), engineering (97; 17.2%), arts and sciences (76; 13.5%), economics and administrative sciences (64; 11.4%). 35 students (6.2%) did not specify which faculty they were registered for.

This research study conducted by three researchers lasted for approximately one year to complete. Having received ethical permission for the study, we contacted the deans asking them for help in distributing surveys. With the lecturers' permission, we handed out the surveys and collected them at the end of the class. We went through the same procedure in each university, visiting nearly 70 classes with an average number of 25 students. The survey response rate was approximately 30%.

The questionnaire in this study was developed by the researchers based on the current literature discussing EAP courses in EMI settings (Demir 2015; Yurekli 2012). It was made up of 2 parts and 8 questions. In the first part, students were asked to provide demographic information. The second part included yes-no questions and questions seeking student responses on a 5-point Likert scale. The validity of the survey was ensured through expert opinion (three faculties; one with a PhD in ELT, one in testing and measurement, one in Turkish language, and one in curriculum and instruction) and a pilot study with 12 students. We used frequency count and percentages to analyze research data.

2.1.2. Qualitative Data

To address our first research question, we collected qualitative data from 332 students indicating that they were currently taking EAP courses. They were asked two open-ended questions to specify in what aspects they found these courses helpful / unhelpful. To address the second research question, qualitative data from 450 students were collected. They were asked to fill in a table to share their suggestions for potential activities to be included in EAP courses. Students' responses were entered into an excel sheet and shared with the researchers. In analyzing qualitative data, we used both deductive and inductive coding techniques (Miles et al. 2014) and went through three stages. First, the nature of the questions enabled us to categorize data under three distinct headings (helpful, unhelpful, potential activities for different skills). Each researcher read through data under these heading, then came together and devised a coding scheme based on their first impressions about the emergent themes. Second, data were coded individually under the emerging themes, new themes were added if necessary. In order to explore to what extent we agreed upon the codes, we analyzed them

before reaching a conclusion (Tinsley and Weiss 2000). As soon as the final themes were agreed upon, we calculated the frequency of themes.

2.2. EAP Courses in Research Context

Information obtained from the websites of three universities under investigation about their EAP curricula revealed that A University offers Foreign Language, English for Academic Purposes (Listening & Speaking), and Academic Writing courses. B University has English for Academic Purposes, Academic Writing and Professional Communication in English, and C University provides English for Specific Purposes, Academic Presentation Skills, and Academic Writing Skills courses to freshmen and sophomores (See Appendix 1). While all EAP courses are delivered by language teachers, EAP curricula considerably vary in their course descriptions, weekly contact hours, teaching and learning activities, and assessment methods.

The curricula of A and B universities include English for Academic Purposes courses, where students in A University are trained in rhetoric, pronunciation and public speaking, while students in B university are trained in reading, writing, and delivering academic presentations. All three universities provide an Academic Writing Course, commonly weighted towards the teaching of academic essays besides the skills of paraphrasing, summarizing, referencing and avoiding plagiarism. A University has a general English course, Foreign Language, and B University has a course called Professional Communication in English, aiming to develop students' communication, problem-solving and professional skills in business. Whether Professional Communication in English course offers a generic or a discipline-specific language training is not stated in the course description. Besides Academic Writing and Academic Presentation Skills, EMI students in C University are offered an English for Specific Purposes course, giving a discipline-specific language training in the fields of Aviation, Management and Engineering.

Regarding the contact hours, A University has 2, B University 3, and C University has 4 weekly hours for 28 weeks in one academic year. The courses are offered for the first and second graders, but no information is provided whether third and fourth graders can or must take any EAP course before graduation. Activities and teaching methods in EAP courses also vary among universities. While A and B University use telling, explaining, discussion, debate, reading, scaffolding, coaching, inquiry, collaborating, think-pair-share, (video) presentations, brainstorming, hands-on activities, and web-searching, C University appears to implement in-class activities, mini presentations, and projects in its curriculum. With regard to their assessment methods, all three universities apply both traditional and alternative methods. Since all information related to research context is limited to what was retrieved from webpages, we are not able to report how course content, teaching activities, delivery and assessment methods are determined, by whom the decisions are made and whether any of these courses are designed based on needs-assessment.

3. RESULTS

3.1. To what extent do students at EMI universities find EAP courses helpful in increasing their academic performance?

We found out that 332 (59%) of the students were currently taking EAP courses as opposed to 231 (41%) who indicated that they were not doing so. Our analysis of the responses of the students taking EAP courses yielded the results displayed in Table 1 in regard to how useful they found these courses in increasing their academic performance.

Table 1 Perceived helpfulness of EAP courses

	f	%
Very helpful	69	21.0
Helpful	146	44.4
Moderately helpful	74	22.5
Slightly helpful	30	9.1
Not helpful at all	10	3.0
Total	329	100

As indicated in Table 1, 65.4% of the students found EAP courses very helpful (21%) or helpful (44.4%) in increasing their academic performance. 22.5% of the students reported they considered such courses to be moderately helpful. Only a minority of the students indicated EAP courses were slightly helpful (9.1%) or not helpful at all (3%).

We also asked the students not taking EAP courses at the time of the study (n:231) to indicate whether they thought taking EAP courses would benefit them. We found out 64.9% of them responded “yes”, 16% said “no” and 19% did not respond.

The results of our analysis of why EAP courses were found useful by research participants are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 Reasons why EMI students find EAP courses helpful

Themes		f	%
Improvement in academic skills	Writing	106	25.6
	Speaking	63	15.2
	Presentation	29	7.0
	Reading	20	4.8
	Listening	15	3.6
	Critical thinking	3	0.7
	How to research academic sources	3	0.7
Improvement in academic language and content knowledge	Knowledge of terminology	60	14.5
	General academic proficiency	55	13.3
	Familiarity with field specific knowledge	16	3.9
	Awareness about academic resources	6	1.4
Personal benefits	Advanced grammar for academic English	5	1.2
	Improving self-confidence	22	5.3
	Preparation for future career	11	2.7
Total		414	100

EMI students (n:414) think EAP courses enable them to improve their academic skills in writing (106; 25,6%), speaking (63;15,2%), presentation (29;7%), reading (20;4,8%), listening (15;3,6%), critical thinking (3;0,7%) and how to research academic sources (3;0.7%).

EAP courses are perceived to improve students' academic language and content knowledge by increasing their knowledge of terminology (60;14.5%), general academic proficiency (55;13.3%), familiarity with field specific knowledge (16;3.9%), awareness about academic resources (6;1.4%), advanced grammar for academic English (5;1.2%). EMI students also reported EAP courses provided them with personal benefits such as improving their self-confidence (22;5.3%) and preparing them for their future careers (11;2.7%).

Students' open-ended responses to the question asking why they found EMI courses unhelpful yielded the results presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Reasons why EMI students find EAP courses unhelpful

Themes		f	%
Dissatisfaction with course design	Content	63	44.4
	Course requirements	13	9.2
	Course hours	11	7.7
	Instructor	8	5.6
	Coursebook	4	2.8
Dissatisfaction with skills improvement	Speaking	14	9.9
	Vocabulary	8	5.6
	Reading	8	5.6
	Writing	8	5.6
	Listening	5	3.5
Total		142	100

EMI students indicated they were dissatisfied with the way EAP courses were designed in terms of course content (63;44.4%), requirements (13;9.2%), contact hours (11;7.7%), instructors (8;5.6%), and coursebooks (4;2.8%). EMI students also reported they were not content with the improvement they witnessed in speaking (14;9.9%), vocabulary (8;5.6%), reading (8;5.6%), writing (8;5.6%) and listening (5;3.5%) skills.

3.2. What do students at EMI universities think that an ideal EAP course should be like?

EMI students' views about an ideal EAP course in terms of its weekly contact hours and the instructors to offer such courses can be found in Table 4 and 5. Majority of the participants (271; 51.6%) think an EAP course should last for 2 hours a week, followed by those who think it should be conducted 3 hours a week (161; 30.7%). The percentage of students who think EAP courses should be offered by English instructors (285; 53.3%) is roughly equal to those who believe these courses should be offered by faculty (250; 46.7%).

Table 4 Suggested weekly contact hours for EAP courses

	f	%
1 hour	18	3.4
2 hours	271	51.6
3 hours	161	30.7
4 hours	34	6.5
5-6 hours	35	6.7
7-8 hours	6	1.1
Total	525	100

Table 5 Suggested instructors for EAP courses

	f	%
Faculty from department	250	46.7
English instructors	285	53.3
Total	535	100

We also sought to determine the type of the skill-based learning activities participants thought an EAP course should include. It is worth mentioning here that a range of skill-based learning activities have been identified in the students' responses to the questionnaire. Considering that 80 % of the students received pre-faculty preparatory language education, the students appeared to be quite aware of the tasks that can contribute to their English proficiency.

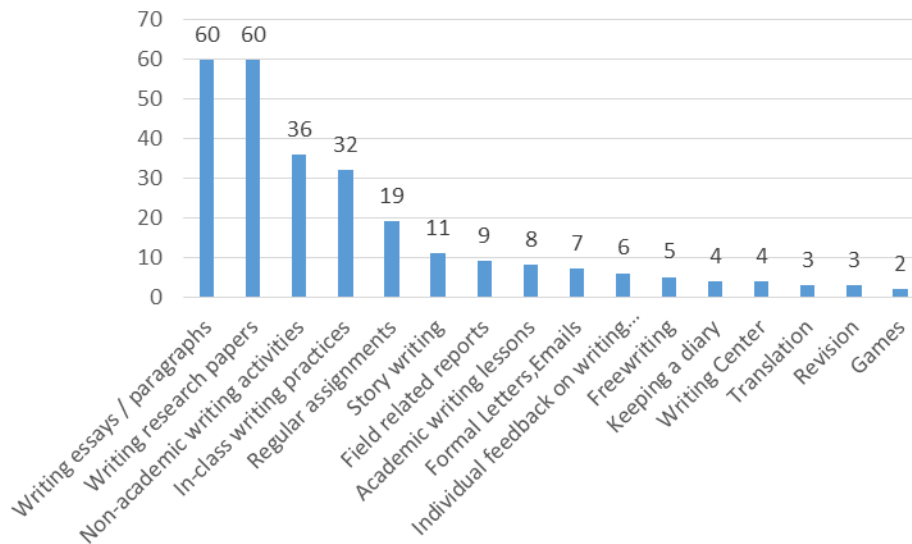


Fig. 1 Suggested writing activities

In Figure 1, we can clearly see the activities mostly suggested by students are writing essays or paragraphs (60;22.3%), research papers (60;22.3%), informal writing activities

(36;13.4%), and in-class writing practices (32;11.9%). However, activities least recommended are games (2;0.7%), revision (3;1.1%), and translation (3;1.1%).

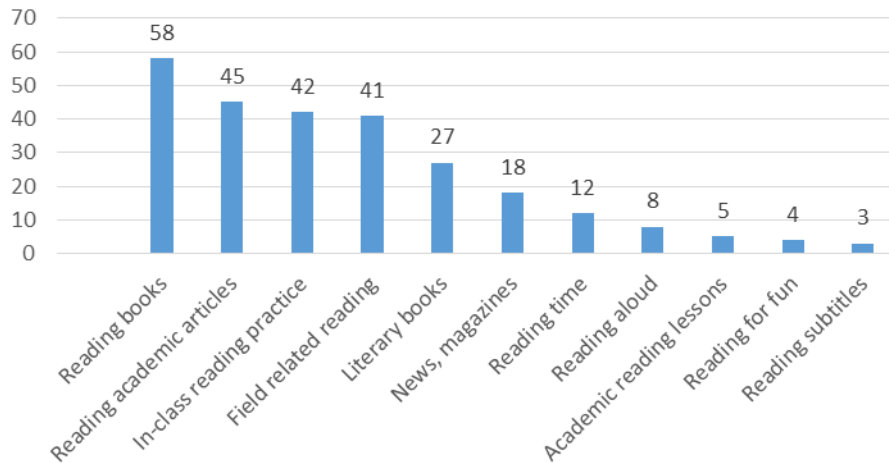


Fig. 2 Suggested reading activities

Figure 2 shows suggested reading activities. First three mostly recommended activities are reading books (58;21.9%), academic articles (45;17%), and in-class reading practice (42;15.8%). On the other hand, least frequently suggested activities are games (2;0.8%), reading subtitles (3;1.1%), and essays (3;1.1%).

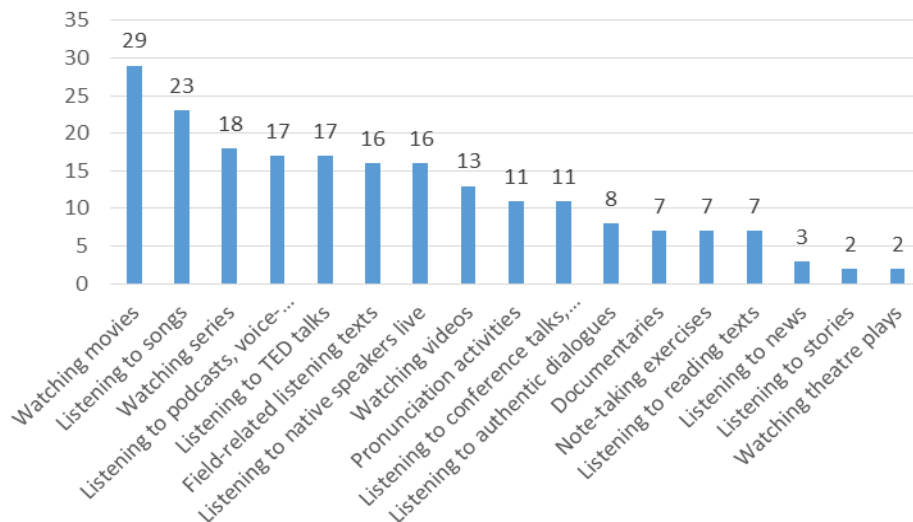


Fig. 3 Suggested listening activities

As for listening skill, we can see in Figure 3 that EMI students suggested that EAP courses should include listening activities such as watching movies (29;14%), listening to songs (23;11.1%), and watching series (18;8.7%). Among the least frequently recommended activities are watching theatre plays (2;1%), listening to stories (2;1%) and news (3;1.4%).

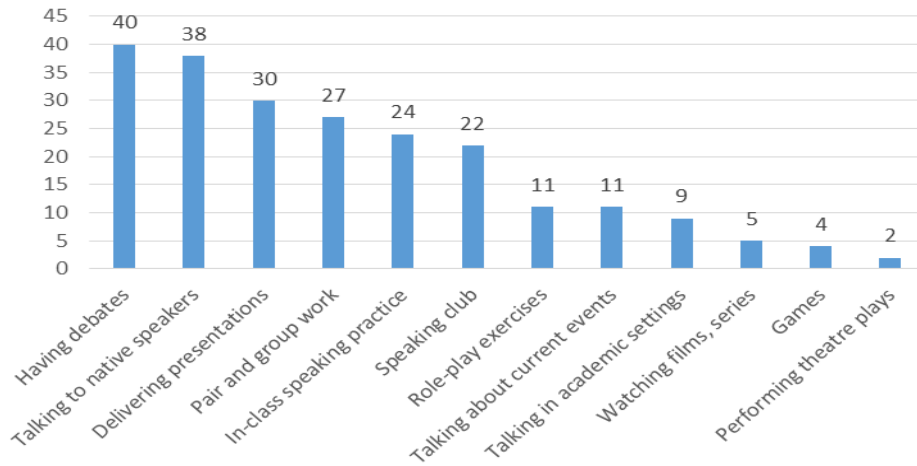


Fig. 4 Suggested speaking activities

In Figure 4, we present the recommended speaking activities. Most suggested activity is having debates (40;17.9%), followed by talking to native speakers (38;17%), and delivering presentations (30;13.5%) respectively. Performing theatre plays (2;0.9%), games (4;1.8%) and watching films or series (5;2.2%) are the least suggested.

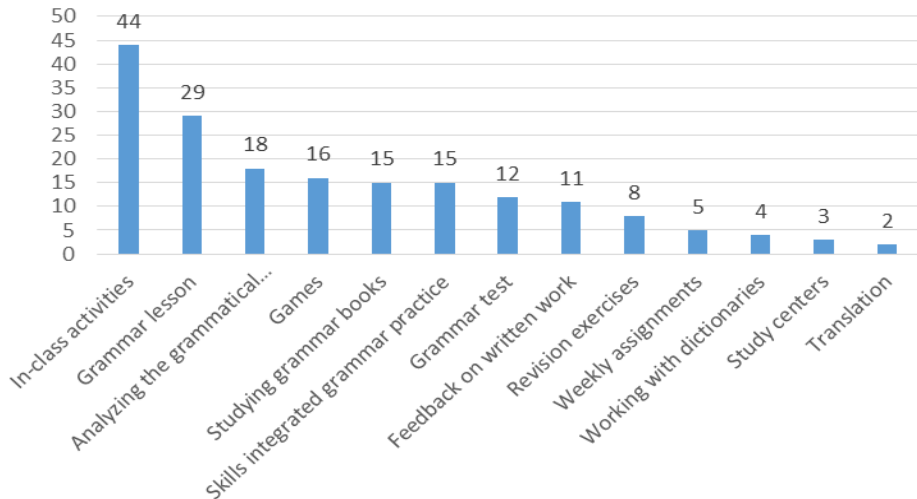


Fig. 5 Suggested grammar activities

With regard to grammar activities, we can see in Figure 5 that grammar activities mostly suggested by EMI students are in-class activities (44;30.6%), grammar lesson (29;20.1%), and analyzing the grammatical structures in articles (18;12.5%). Least suggested activities are translation (2;1.4%), study centers (3;2.1%) and working with dictionaries (4;2.8%).

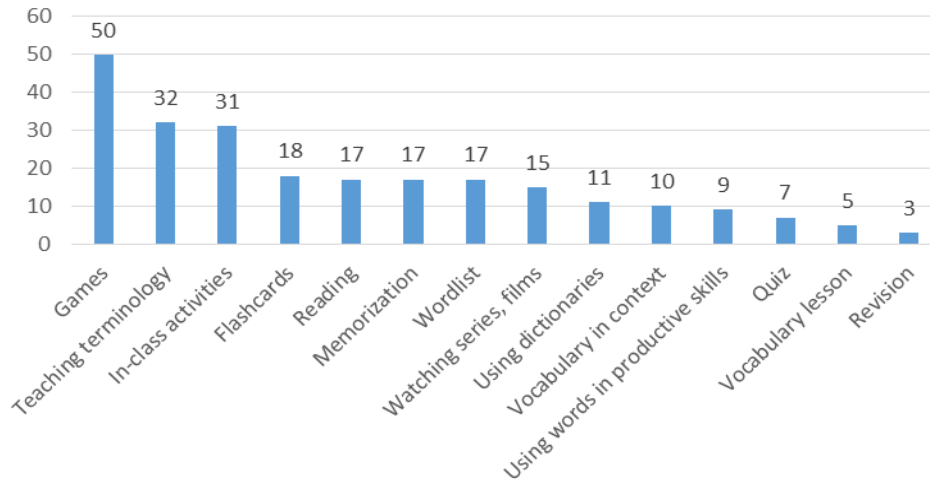


Fig. 6 Suggested vocabulary activities

Figure 6 shows the types of suggested vocabulary activities. Participants indicated they should learn new words through games (50;20.7%), teaching terminology (32;13.2%), and in-class activities (31;12.8%). However, revision (3;1.2%), teaching words with visuals (5;2.1%) and having a separate vocabulary lesson (5;2.1%) come last in the list.

It should be highlighted that the majority of the participants in this study attended a one-year compulsory preparatory English language program, and could relate this unique experience with their undergraduate studies and refer back to it if they deemed it necessary. Considering that the study was undertaken in an EMI setting, participants could forge a natural and experiential link between their majors and the type of activities that need to be integrated into an EAP curriculum.

4. DISCUSSION

This study researched to what extent students at three EMI universities found EAP courses helpful in increasing their academic performance and how they described an ideal EAP course in EMI contexts. Findings revealed EAP courses were found by the majority of the students effective in supporting their academic performance. Students found EAP courses most helpful in developing writing skills, followed by speaking and presentation skills. This might be due to Academic Writing Skills and Academic Presentation Skills courses freshmen and sophomores attended at universities under investigation. Although it was not validated by examination or GPA scores, students might have developed competence in productive skills thanks to such courses. Since writing (e.g. Breeze and Dafaouz 2017; Evans and Morrison 2011; Kamasak et al. 2021; Lee and Lee 2018; Tomak

and Ataş 2019) and speaking (e.g. Aizawa and Rose 2020; Chang 2010; Evans and Morrison 2011; Kamasak et al. 2021; Oner and Mede 2015) were reportedly found the most challenging areas for students in many EMI settings; our findings might suggest a skills-based program helped students cope with difficulties in writing and speaking. This differs from Kırkgöz (2009) revealing that a skills-based EAP curriculum was inadequate in supporting students' academic improvement. These variations might be either contextual (Aizawa and Rose 2020) or disciplinary (Airey et al. 2017). Further investigation into students' disciplines, language proficiencies and exam scores in our context is needed for in-depth discussion about perceived improvement in writing and speaking.

Students acknowledged reading, listening, critical thinking and researching academic resources as relatively less supported skills, which corroborates previous studies (e.g. Airey and Linder 2006; Bradford 2018; Chan 2015; Spirovska 2020; Uchihara and Harada 2018) confirming receptive skills in EAP courses created barriers to students' academic improvement. Since receptive skills are highly essential for the comprehension of academic content, it would be hard to expect from students to recognize facts and claims, analyze arguments and make inferences about their academic disciplines with limited comprehension in reading and listening. Thus, the finding related to the perceived less improvement in critical thinking is not surprising since comprehension is a critical thinking act (Aloqaili 2011; Norris and Philips 1987). The same might be true for less improvement in researching academic resources because distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant academic sources or determining their reliability require the skills of comprehension and critical thinking.

Most students reported gains in subject-specific terminology and general academic proficiency; however, the findings highlighted a need to provide more opportunities for acquiring familiarity with field-specific knowledge, academic resources and learning advanced grammar. Some students reported their expectation of more explicit instruction in content and linguistic knowledge or feeling relatively less improved in these skills. We might associate this with a discussion about a dual loss in EMI contexts (Hamid et al. 2013). Dual loss in our context might have emerged from students' low language proficiency, quality of academic content, or challenges lecturers face while delivering disciplinary courses through EMI. These seem to validate the previous studies (e.g. Lei and Hu 2014; Yang 2015) where EMI students were found to suffer from little development in both academic content and language skills. Regarding the finding on advanced grammar, we could question whether general English courses or English preparatory programs (EPP) could prepare students sufficiently for disciplinary courses where academic English is required (Chang 2010). This may underline the need in EMI for additional language support programs, designed as either a curricular or an extracurricular activity, where students are provided with "systematic" and "ongoing" language courses related to their disciplines (Kirkpatrick 2014, 7).

Another finding is related to students' lack of awareness of academic sources and how to research them. Students, lacking necessary skills in finding appropriate academic sources, might be expecting either a language instructor or a faculty to guide them through their academic studies. Thus, offering high quality academic advising where students' academic needs are responded to and they are assisted by their advisors or mentors in being more autonomous (McGill, Ali and Barton 2020) in doing research is crucial.

Findings yielded satisfactory results regarding students' perceptions of improved self-confidence and preparation for future careers. Providing better employment opportunities for

students at local and international level is regarded as a driving force behind EMI at HE (Aizawa and Rose 2020; Bozdoğan and Karlıdağ 2013; Selvi 2014). EAP courses in this study seem to be consistent with this instrumental advantage.

Considering students who found EAP courses little helpful, findings indicated speaking as the least improved skill, followed by vocabulary, reading, writing and listening. Previous studies from different EMI settings reported identical results regarding the significance of speaking as well as vocabulary (e.g. Jiang et al. 2019; Kamasak et al. 2021) and suggested a provision of more practice in speaking besides more exposure to subject-specific terminology (Chang 2010; Evans and Green 2007; Kamasak et al. 2021). We believe a “meaningful integration of skills” in EAP curricula can help receptive and productive skills reinforce each other and assist students in getting prepared for academic studies (Caplan 2016, 29). EMI universities can provide assistance to students for the improvement of language skills via academic and language support services.

Results of the study further revealed students’ expectations of EAP courses related to the content, course requirements, contact hours, instructors and course books. Students’ suggestions can give us an insight into the development of learner-centered EAP curricula, although we are aware that each EMI setting is unique (Aizawa and Rose 2020; Chen et al. 2020). Many students suggested 2-3 contact hours per week. This appears to fit the weekly hours most Turkish EMI universities currently allocate for EAP courses. Regarding course delivery, results demonstrated half the students wanted an English instructor, while the other half expected faculty to deliver EAP courses. In our view, EMI students here stressed the importance of language teachers’ and faculty’s being proficient in both content and linguistic knowledge. EMI does not primarily focus on language enhancement (Aizawa and Rose 2020), yet students explicitly need adequate language proficiency to acquire and display disciplinary knowledge (Kırkgöz 2014; Vukićević Đorđević, 2019; Wong and Wu 2011). This might indicate some students found their language teachers inadequate in the teaching of content while some others perceived content teachers had language proficiency problems. This requires further inquiry. In either case, we call for an enhanced communication and collaboration between language and content teachers who will ideally work together to address both disciplinary and language needs of EMI students (Dearden, Macaro and Akincioglu 2016; Jiang et al. 2019).

EMI students wanted writing tasks to be carried out in the form of essay writing. Additionally, students seemed to seek further opportunities where they could learn academic content by writing research papers. In general, intensive Turkish EPP programs provide students with training in writing about general topics rather than academic subjects, but research findings by Yildiz, Soruç and Griffiths (2017) revealed a need for writing about academic subjects in EPP programs. So incorporating academic writing into EPP curricula could be considered to provide early support before taking disciplinary courses.

Students mostly proposed reading books, reading academic articles and in-class reading practice. Actually, it is surprising to see that reading books was preferred most in this category. To interpret what students meant by reading books, whether on general or academic topics, we demand further investigation. However, expecting an EAP course to provide an in-class reading practice might provide evidence for students’ lack of overall reading habits. Earlier, we mentioned students’ feeling less improved in receptive skills, which we can also associate with poor reading habits. This can also be supported by PISA (2018) results indicating Turkish students scored lower than the OECD average in reading. We see that reading is a major problem both in native and target language. We

further found students placed emphasis on reading academic articles in courses. With more opportunities to read academic sources with subject-specific terminology, students might acquire competence in content and language knowledge as suggested by Göktürk Sağlam and Yalçın Duman (2020).

We found watching movies, listening to songs, and watching series were highly favorable listening activities. Listening was identified as an area where students felt less academic improvement. We could hardly associate their suggestions with academic listening. Instead, they sounded more like non-academic extracurricular activities organized by EPP programs. This might be attributed to students' inadequate knowledge about academic listening. The same confusion might be true for EAP courses. After completing EPP, students might regard EAP courses as the continuation of general English courses where they thought of implementing similar curricular and extracurricular activities to advance their general linguistic skills. If this were the case, students might be offered orientation programs where they are introduced to EAP courses' content, objectives, method of delivery and forms of assessment.

Mostly suggested speaking activities were debates, talking to native speakers, and delivering presentations. Results demonstrated speaking was highlighted by the majority of the students for their academic improvement, both by those who found EAP courses helpful and those who did not. Therefore, it is essential to address the needs of students in speaking by providing ample opportunity for the active use of academic language in classes through interactive teaching methods.

In-class activities, grammar lessons, and analyzing the grammatical structures in articles were mostly preferred grammar activities. It is interesting to see students wanted explicit grammar teaching in EAP. This gave us the impression that lessons they took in EPP failed to provide them with an appropriate level of grammar knowledge to understand academic articles. Thus, a need for extra linguistic support to EMI students could be underlined as similarly emphasized by other studies (Aizawa and Rose 2020; Kamasak et al. 2021; Galloway and Rueg 2020). Students also suggested learning terminology or subject-specific vocabulary through games and in-class activities. This might imply their expectation to have more fun and active learning opportunities to understand academic content.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Regardless of their perceived academic improvement, EMI students in our context experienced linguistic challenges (e.g listening, reading, grammar, speaking, and vocabulary) preventing them from learning academic content successfully. Although all EMI students, with low English proficiency, attend a compulsory EPP program prior to their departmental study in Turkey, the curricula of EPPs might not lend strong support to EMI students for a smooth transition to disciplinary courses (British Council 2015) and successful following of the course content during initial years of academic studies. This might result from students' entry and exit proficiency levels, duration and content of the program, and a lack of an agreed language proficiency standard among EMI universities. Since students enroll in EMI universities with varying proficiency levels, EPP may fall behind equipping them with required skills in using academic language within a limited time. This might apply more to those who begin EPP with A1 level of English. This group of students might need to attend a compulsory additional year of EPP to be

proficient enough to study academic content in English. However, in accordance with regulations by Turkish HE Council, students having failed in EPP in the first year are allowed to improve their language proficiency with their own means, which leads failed students to stop regularly attending EPP courses and not improving their language adequately. Here, we suggest all EPP programs, regardless of students' academic disciplines, offering primarily general English courses in the first semester. In the second semester, depending on students' disciplines, EPP programs may add their curricula English for specific purposes (ESP) as well as EAP courses where students with higher proficiency levels could begin receiving training in subject-specific and academic language skills. For lower proficiency students, we suggest completing general English courses in the first year, and a provision of ESP and EAP content in the first semester of the second compulsory year in EPP programs. Thus, we recommend a thorough revision of EPP regarding its entry and exit standards, its duration and content by curriculum specialists, and other stakeholders in HE in order to qualify students better for academic programs. Linguistic support should not terminate upon the completion of EPP. During academic programs, elective language courses or extracurricular programs especially for students in demand for language support might be good alternatives to reinforce language skills and assist in understanding of academic content (British Council Report, 2015).

Findings underline the importance of academic advising. Students have little awareness of which academic sources to read, where to find them and how to select relevant ones. We believe academic advisors are the primary resources for learning. Their support should not be restricted to course registration at semester beginnings but consists of informing, suggesting, counselling, coaching, mentoring, and teaching. With their guidance, advisors should be able to provide students with a vision about all academic, social, and individual topics (Kuhn 2008). Thus, besides content teachers, academic advisors should take responsibility for helping students achieve their academic goals by gaining the skills of reaching the right sources, conducting research and writing research papers. Another suggestion is related to students' emphasis on writing essays and research papers. Due to time concerns in EAP courses, both language and content teachers might have difficulties in completing the program and providing one-to-one support to students. In this case, academic writing centers could be established. In these centers, each student can receive assistance regarding their immediate needs from a language teacher or an academician. Similar academic services could be provided for the improvement of speaking skills where students can interact with native speakers, watch movies, and do presentations which may support their language and content advancement.

We could understand students did not have a common idea of what EAP courses should offer and include. This was evidenced well by their responses regarding the content of an ideal EAP course. While some wanted explicit grammar teaching, and book reading, some others wanted to watch films, and do presentations. This confusion might emerge from EMI universities' own lack of established standards in terms of objectives, content, delivery, and assessment of programs. For quality assurance and sustainability, however, EMI universities should seek ways to agree on common standards for EAP courses. Their duration, content, delivery and assessment methods might be discussed in common platforms with more interaction and dialogue between language teachers and faculty, EPP and undergraduate programs representatives, and curriculum specialists of different EMI universities and university administrators with consideration of local needs. Speaking of quality and sustainability, we also suggest adopting a learner-centered

approach in which all components of EAP courses are aligned with students' needs (Anthony 2018). Offering continuous professional development opportunities for both language and content teachers is also essential. After a thorough needs analysis, training programs for EMI academic staff on lesson planning, teaching, classroom management, and collaborative working skills can be organized. These can be in the form of in-house programs or arranged with the collaboration of EMI universities, which can help create professional learning networks among EMI professionals.

Main limitation in this study is about data collection procedures. First, data for the study were collected from three Turkish EMI universities and from relatively a small number of students. Second, participants consisted mostly of first and second year students. Thus, it would be wrong to generalize findings to the perceptions of a wider population in either these universities or other EMI settings. Additionally, more qualitative data could be collected via focus group interviews with students from all grades in order to gain better understanding of the research inquiry. Lastly, consulting EAP teachers and faculty about their perceptions of EAP courses would enrich data. Therefore, further studies, which involve language and content teachers' opinions, can provide a comprehensive picture of EAP courses in Turkey and their expected design features.

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