

## Faculty Interview Report

This research study aims to gather information about academic staff's perceptions regarding the English proficiency of Middle East Technical University (METU) students and English education provided by the School of Foreign Languages (SFL). The research questions are listed below:

From the perspective of the faculty members,

What are METU students' departmental needs in terms of English?

What are METU students' career needs in terms of English?

How can SFL further help students to succeed in their departmental studies?

How can SFL further help students to succeed in their career?

## Methodology

### Participants

Thirty-eight faculty members representing the five faculties that provide undergraduate education at METU were involved in the research. A combination of stratified and convenience sampling was used to determine the participants. Table 1 shows the distribution of the student population at METU over faculties and the number of academic staff interviewed from each faculty. As the pie charts in Figures 1 and 2 illustrate, the number of academic staff interviewed from each faculty is determined in a way to represent the population of the undergraduate students enrolled in that faculty in the 2013-14 academic year. As the interviews progressed, two adjustments were made to the initial list. In the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, one more academic staff was added to the list since the need to collect further information arose as the interviews were conducted. The changes to the initially planned numbers are indicated with an asterisk in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The distribution of the student population at METU over faculties and the number of academic staff interviewed from each faculty

Faculty	N. of students	N. of interviewees
Faculty of Engineering	6579	18
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	2445	*9 → 10
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	1898	*4 → 5
Faculty of Education	1031	3
Faculty of Architecture	802	2
(TOTAL numbers)	12755	38

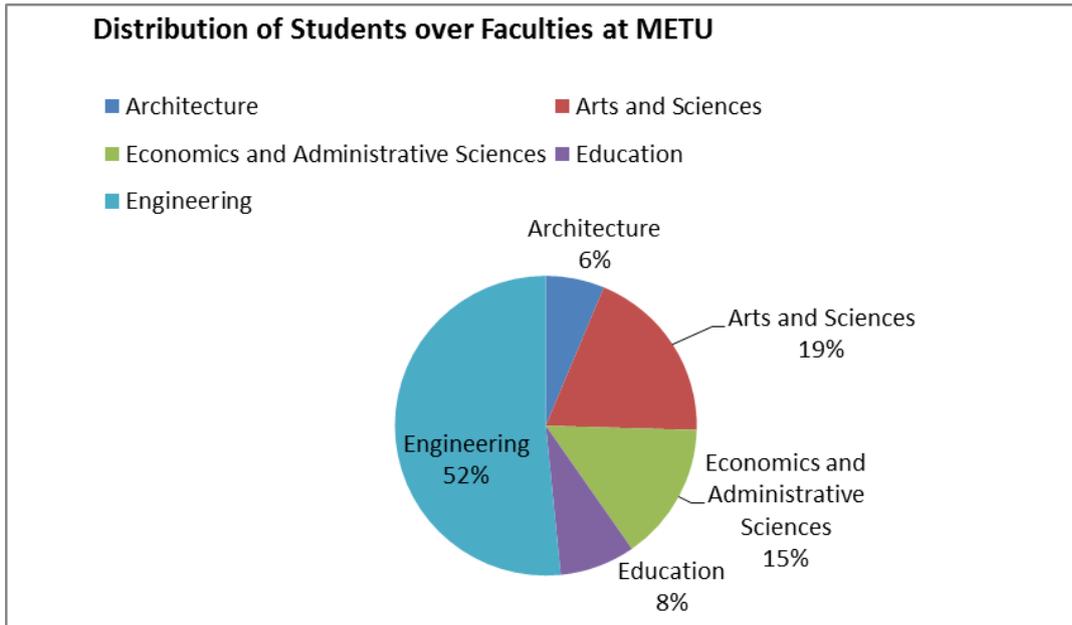


Figure 1: The distribution of students over faculties at METU

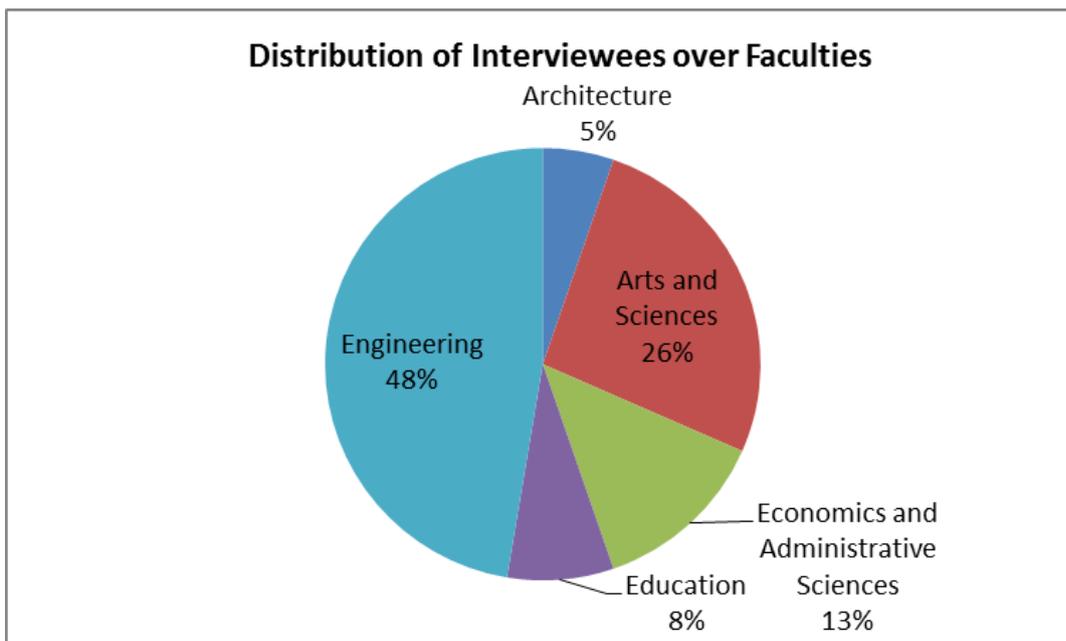


Figure 2: The distribution of interviewees over faculties in the sample

As seen in Figure 2 above, the majority of the participants were selected from the Faculty of Engineering (48%). This was done so since this is the largest faculty at METU, constituting 52% of the undergraduate population. Five percent of the professors were from the Faculty of Architecture, 8% from the Faculty of Education, and 13% were from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. Twenty-six percent of the participants were from the Faculty of Arts and Science. In this study, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

was divided into two groups: The first group covers the departments of natural sciences: Department of Biology (BIO), Department of Mathematics (MATH), Department of Physics (PHYS), Department of Chemistry (CHEM), and Department of Statistics (STAT). The second group is the social sciences departments: Department of History (HIST) Department of Philosophy (PHIL) Department of Psychology (PSY), and Department of Sociology (SOC). Once the numbers of the interviewees in the sampling were determined, convenient sampling was used to contact faculty members from the faculties.

The sample represented faculty members with various academic ranks and years of teaching experience. The analysis of the demographic information questions in the interviews indicated that 11 of the 38 participants had administrative positions. There were two vice-deans, two department chairs, four vice-chairs, two SUNY coordinators, and two Erasmus coordinators in the sample. Thirty-one of the interviewed academic staff (81%) were METU graduates. One of the participants was non-Turkish (Figures 3 and 4).

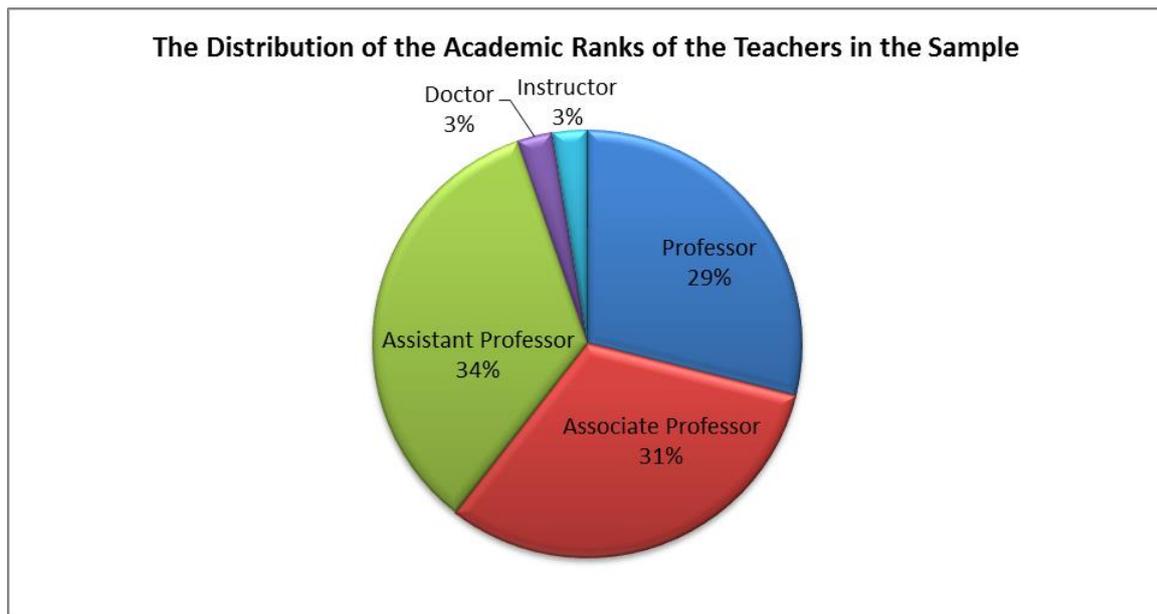


Figure 3: The distribution of the academic ranks of the teaching staff in the sample

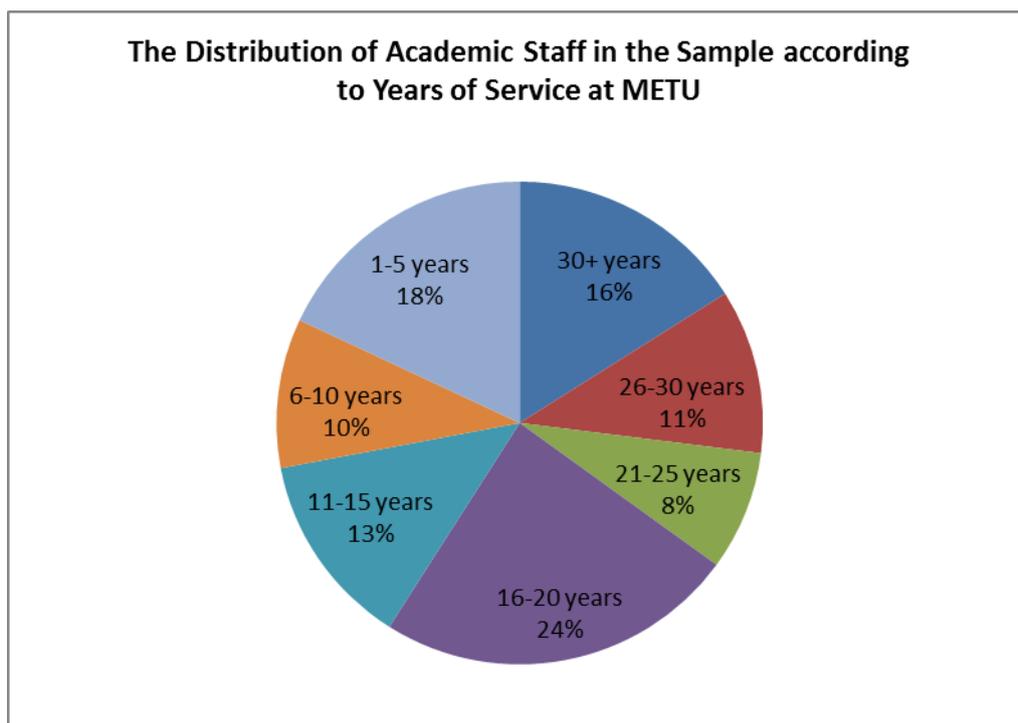


Figure 4: The distribution of the interviewed academic staff according to years of teaching experience at METU

### **Data collection**

A structured interview composed of two demographic information questions and eight open-ended content questions was used to collect data. There were follow-up questions for some of these questions. The interviews were planned to last 30 minutes; however, in some cases they extended to an hour. The interview questions were prepared and piloted by a team of Research and Development (R & D) researchers at MLD (See Appendix A for the interview questions). Ethics committee approval had been granted prior to the administration of interviews. The interviews were conducted during the Spring semester of 2013-14 academic year.

The first question in the interview focused on the importance of English as perceived by the faculty and had three parts:

- To what extent is English proficiency important for your students to be successful in the department?
- How important is high English proficiency for the students in your department to be successful in their career?
- To what extent is the importance of English emphasized in your department?

The second question focused on the kind of assessment practices that are commonly used in the faculties. The third question asked the faculty members to evaluate the sufficiency of students' English competence to meet the demands in their departments and elaborate on students' strengths and the areas of difficulty. The follow-up question investigated the widely used test types. The fourth question asked the faculty members how they supported students when they had difficulties in following the lessons in English. The fifth question looked into what strategies faculty members adopted to increase student participation in English. Question 6 investigated how the faculty members approached student mistakes in their written work. Question 7 explored the faculty members' views on adopting an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach. Question 8 asked what kind of academic skills should be emphasized at the Department of Basic English (DBE) and Department of Modern Languages (MLD) in addition to English education. The ninth question inquired if the faculty members talked with students about the English education at METU and if so what information they obtained from them. The final question asked the participants to report anything they would have liked to bring up if they had attended a meeting with the DBE and MLD staff.

There were 6 researchers on the interview team, and all the interviews were carried out by two researchers. Based on the reflections on the pilot interviews, the R & D team decided not to record the interviews. Instead, while one of the researchers asked the questions, the other took notes. With the exception of one interview, the interviews were conducted in Turkish. These notes were summarized based on the research questions and were emailed to the participants for approval, which is one of the methods adopted to achieve reliability in the study.

### **Data analysis**

Miles and Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis method was used to analyse the data. The data was read multiple times with a focus on the research questions, and recurring themes were identified and coded. Similar codes were then clustered. When relevant, the frequencies were counted. To achieve reliability, an independent researcher was asked to read and evaluate the findings and discussion parts of the study.

## **Findings**

In this part of the report, the findings of the study are presented under the identified themes according to Faculties.

### **Importance of English:**

The study investigated the perception of the academic staff regarding the importance of English for students' success in the department and for their career. Here the findings are presented with certain justifications provided by the participants.

#### *Faculty of Architecture*

The participants believe that English is very important for their students. Assessment is done in English. Graduates need English to follow literature and to find jobs in the international market. English is also important for students who are planning to pursue an academic career.

In order to encourage students to use English, the Faculty of Architecture has decreased the number of compulsory courses making room for elective courses where students are more likely to find more opportunities to speak in English.

In the program outcomes of the Faculty of Architecture, helping graduates to be able to follow both national and international publications and to develop competencies to pursue a career in both Turkish and international contexts are listed as important goals.

#### *Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

##### *Social Sciences*

The participant from the Department of Psychology stated that English is very important for students' success in the department. If their English is good, they are likely to succeed in most of the courses in the department. English is also important for them to follow literature when they graduate. However, whether they will use English or not in their career mostly depends on where they work. The professor from the Department of History said that it is important for an historian to know English. They should be able to use both European and Ottoman archives, and added that they can work in a range of places.

The professor from the Department of Sociology also said that English is important for departmental success. S/he stated that if a student has a good command of English, that student can create the impression that his/her work is good even if the content of his/her work is not so. On the other hand, a student with poor English cannot be successful even if s/he is a hard worker. S/he added that English is also very important for their career because, most of

the time, they work in posts where they are expected to have a good command of English. However, according to him/her, students may not be aware of this importance.

The participant from the Department of Philosophy indicated that English is a commonly discussed topic in their department. In his/her view, the background of the professor has a significant impact on how much importance s/he attaches to it. According to him/her, academic staff with strong English attaches greater importance to English. S/he added that whether graduates will use English depends on their career choice. In his/her view, knowing how to think is more important than good English for students to be successful in the department.

#### *Natural Sciences*

The participant from the Department of Mathematics said that English is extremely important for students' success in their department and career and added that unless they are aware of this importance, students will not value English. In his/her view, although English is not the language of mathematics, it is the language of science and therefore students should have a good command of English. The professor from the Department of Statistics shared a similar stance. S/he also acknowledged that mathematical intelligence is of crucial importance in their field; however, students who are not competent in English cannot display their full potential. S/he reported that STAT decided to keep ENG 311 as a compulsory course in the curriculum and all the lessons including the recitations are expected to be given in English.

There were two participants from the Department of Physics. The first one (PHYS 1) stated that students should feel that their department values English and added that in his/her opinion the Department of Physics does not. S/he added that there is not much English teachers can do when the teachers in the department do not care about English. S/he said that English is about life and students' career, and it is important to convey this message to the students. The second professor (PHYS 2) indicated that although the language of physics is mathematics, English is important for departmental success and added that s/he would give 4 out of 5 to English in a scale of importance for success. It is also important for students' careers. Turkish sources are very few and students need to follow English literature starting in their second year. PHYS 2 referred to international conferences and said that "one may be very good at making calculations, but if one cannot tell this to others, they can lose interest". S/he does not think that academic staff explicitly stress the importance of English, but s/he thinks it is implicitly done. S/he stated that field-specific literature in English is very rich, and thus, they are pushing students to use English sources.

The participant from the Department of Chemistry indicated that English is very important for students' future success; however, it is not as important for their success in the department. The reason is that when students have good knowledge of chemistry, their answers are accepted even if their English is weak. According to him/her, although some people are against English medium instruction on the grounds that it is an imperialistic movement, knowing a second language also improves one's native language. S/he added that it is very difficult to learn a second language at the age forty of when preparing for associate professorship. S/he provided information about how over the years the Department of Chemistry has taken action to encourage students to improve their English. In the 90s, two seminar courses were introduced to the program: CHEM 200, for the first and second years, and CHEM 400, for the third and fourth years. The guest speakers who attend these courses also talk about the importance of English for students' careers. Another change that was implemented in the same period was the introduction of elective courses in which students can make presentations. In these courses, students give 10-15 minute presentations, which not only improves their English but also prepares them for their career. S/he added that students get very anxious in their first presentations but they gradually start to feel better. Starting from their undergraduate education, students are expected to attend seminars. This is to encourage them to communicate with people and help them to be prepared to use English when they start their jobs. The professor indicated that the Department is trying to change the presumption that "METU students can read and listen in English, but they cannot speak". S/he suggested other departments to take similar actions. S/he added that English courses on its own would not suffice to improve students' English and departments also need to take action to support the development of English skills.

The participant from the Department of Biology indicated that English is important for success both in the department and in professional careers. S/he said that English is the language of science and if one is engaged in science and technology, that person has to know English. S/he said "I keep telling this to my students. There must also be students who are aware of this". S/he appreciates the work of SFL and said "METU is among the most reputable universities because our students know English".

### *Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*

English is important especially in social science courses. However, one of the participants stated that at staff meetings in the Department of Business Administration the focus is mainly on the importance of mathematics. They discuss how students' mathematical knowledge can be improved and how calculus lessons can be structured to help them do better. English is also reported to be a problem in these meetings. However, they have not taken any action yet. S/he adds that students also do not seem to perceive English lessons as important. Calculus is a 5-credit course and they work very hard to succeed in it. English courses are 4 credits but students do not take them seriously. S/he added that the teachers at the department have a responsibility to change this perception. Similarly, the professor from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration believes that students do not seem to be aware of the importance of English for their career. S/he added that probably they think that they will have time to improve it at a later time. Students' lack of motivation to study English is also reported by two of the other participants. Below is what the one from the Department of Economics said:

Middle East Technical University prides itself on being one of the two best universities in Turkey and has ambitions towards world-class status. It has promise. However, that promise cannot be fulfilled unless students are given adequate academic tools and skills. For better or worse English is the medium of instruction here. Surely, the English language instruction should be improved.

### *Faculty of Education*

Although the participants stated that they believe English is important for students' success in the department and their career, they express their concern that students may not be aware of this. One of the professors stated that some teachers in the faculty do not use English in class and they allow students to use Turkish. In such cases, students do not have to use much English in the departmental courses and as a result their English deteriorates. On the other hand, the participants stated that assessment is in English; thus, students need to have good English skills in order to be successful in the departments. Another teacher pointed out the fact that courses like maths are no longer taught in English in secondary education, and this is another reason why English may not be that relevant to students' immediate needs since the majority of students prefer to work in state schools. However, s/he pointed out that still students need English in their career in cases where they are expected to communicate with international schools. Finally, it was pointed out that most of the sources are in English, and to follow literature and continue their professional development students need English.

The interview results overall reveal that the teachers vary to a great extent in the importance they attach to English, which can be observed in the teaching methodology. There are teachers who are against the idea of English medium instruction, teachers who try their best to encourage students to use English, and teachers who are tired of students' resistance to speak in English. This theme is further explored in "Turkish use in the Departments".

### *Faculty of Engineering*

Out of the 18 faculty members 10 stated that English is very important for students' success in the department. The participants from the Department of Computer Engineering (ENG 6), Electrical and Electronics Engineering (ENG 8), and Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering (ENG 18) stated that the sector revolves around English. The faculty members from the Department of Food Engineering (ENG 11) and Industrial Engineering indicated that since the department requires both mathematical and verbal skills, English is very important in their field. Seven participants highlighted the importance of English for following literature in the field. Measurement and evaluation, following the lectures, and reading the course material are other themes raised by the participants. On the other hand, 7 faculty members mentioned that advanced English skills are not essential for success since mathematical operations are of more crucial importance for student success in the department. One participant said that they do not really need to speak in class whereas another said there is not time to have interactive lessons.

Ten of the academicians from the Engineering Faculty stated that English is very important for students' careers. Two of them added that METU graduates are expected to have a good command of English. Three participants stated that English is more essential for them to succeed in their career than in their departments, while three participants said the degree of importance English has for their career depends on their career choice.

### **Turkish use in the departments**

Data analysis revealed Turkish use in the courses as a common theme. Overall, students' use of Turkish to communicate in lectures was brought up by the majority of the faculty members. Some of the teachers also use Turkish at varying amounts for a number of reasons.

### *Faculty of Architecture*

The courses are divided into two as practical and theoretical courses. Theoretical courses are offered in English. Studio is the most widely known practical course, and students make planning and design projects in this course. Jury presentations in the studio classes are generally in English. However, when students are very anxious, they switch to Turkish. They do not lose points for using Turkish in the presentations.

International students are a major incentive for conducting the lessons in English. There are professors who sometimes use Turkish in elective courses when there are not any international students. Students sometimes ask questions in Turkish and the teachers answer these questions in English.

### *Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

#### *Social Sciences*

The participant from the Department of Psychology said that s/he teaches in English; however, s/he switches into Turkish when students lose their concentration and/or they cannot understand the lesson. Students ask the questions in Turkish. The jokes are in Turkish. When there are international students in class, s/he tells them that s/he will repeat the Turkish part in English as well. At the undergraduate level, the lectures and discussions are in English. In the graduate program, the presentations are in English but discussions are in Turkish. The professor from the Department of History also switches into Turkish when students cannot understand the lesson.

The professor from the Department of Sociology indicated that compared to the times when s/he was a student at METU, the department and teachers now give much more importance to English lessons. S/he said that, back then, teachers used to teach in Turkish. S/he stated that despite his/her warnings, there are students who start to speak in English and continue in Turkish. Students choose to participate in Turkish or they do not participate. When students ask questions in Turkish, s/he translates them into English. S/he explained why s/he does not want to force students to speak in English:

I think it is important not to hurt students' feelings. Most of the time, students from low-income backgrounds have limited English. For example, one of my students is from Muş and his English is weak. I prefer not to hurt him. There is the psychological dimension of the problem. He said he didn't attend classes because he felt uncomfortable when he tried to speak. When other students are good at speaking, the weak students shy away. When strong students make fun of these students, I react strongly. I'm sure you're familiar with the "college girl" stereotype. When such

students tease their friends for their language or other mistakes, they can be really intimidating. This creates tension in class.

As the professor's explanations reveal, two reasons why teachers do not push students to speak English are that (1) students stop participating altogether and that (2) they do not want to intimidate shy and/or weak students. S/he also said that at the end of the class, s/he wraps up the lesson in Turkish in three minutes.

The interviewee from the Department of Philosophy said that s/he also uses Turkish texts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year courses in order to introduce philosophical texts and the philosophers.

#### *Natural Sciences*

The interviewee from the Department of Mathematics indicated that s/he gives his/her courses in English; however, in the department s/he observes a tendency to teach the courses in Turkish. S/he said that Calculus is a six-credit course in six lessons a week, and in four of these lessons, the focus is on theory and in the remaining two lessons the focus is on problem solution. S/he said that most of the recitations and some of the theory lessons are conducted in Turkish. S/he explained that mathematics is a challenging course and therefore when the teachers feel that students do not understand they switch into Turkish. S/he added that sometimes English is seen as an obstacle to students' success and reported the results of a research study conducted in his/her department regarding the impact of the medium of instruction on success. They had two groups of students. One of the groups was taught in English, whereas the other was taught in Turkish. There was not any significant finding in students' mathematical success in these two groups. According to him/her, the so-called obstacle is psychological and most of the teachers, consciously or unconsciously, and despite the fact that they completed their PhDs abroad, choose the easy way and teach in Turkish. S/he also said that the students put pressure on their teachers to teach the lessons in Turkish and added that having the lessons in Turkish is unfair to international students.

The professor from the Department of Statistics indicated that students shy away from asking questions in the lessons. S/he added that especially when there are international students, s/he wanted them to speak in English and added that s/he sometimes translates what students say in Turkish to English for international students. Students sometimes start in English and then switch to Turkish. The interviewee stated that s/he does not know how to encourage students to speak in English.

The first participant from the Department of Physics (PHYS 1) shared some of the techniques s/he uses in his/her classes. In one of the elective courses, s/he asks students to give presentations using English sources. However, the presentations are in Turkish because s/he does not want students to copy from the courses or to memorize. Then they write the report in English. The report is approximately 5 pages in length. The discussions in the lessons are in Turkish. PHYS 2 indicated that s/he rarely uses Turkish in his/her lessons and added that Turkish should not be used frequently since students get confused.

The professor from the Department of Chemistry said that s/he does not use Turkish in his/her lessons and believes that the majority of the teachers in the department also do not teach in Turkish. However, s/he uses Turkish in his/her office hours to answer students' questions. S/he thinks that over the years, the student profile has changed. In the past, the students would follow the lectures in English and would ask questions in English, but now they find it difficult to follow the lessons and they ask questions in Turkish.

The participant from the Department of Biology said that when the students feel stuck, they switch into Turkish. In these cases, s/he does not interrupt. S/he said "I teach science. The student starts in English with good intentions. If I interrupt, I demotivate them. When the student is engaged in a scientific discussion, I do not interfere by saying 'continue in English'". The teacher said that s/he never uses Turkish in class and gives all the answers in English. S/he stated that students need to develop a feeling for using the terminology correctly and is totally against the use of Turkish to teach that terminology. S/he never gives Turkish equivalents of the terms pointing out that there is glossary at the end of each chapter which explains the terms. Students can learn the terminology by studying this part.

#### *Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*

The amount of Turkish use varies from teacher to teacher and from course to course. For example, while one of the teachers uses only English, another giving the same course teaches the lesson first in English and then in Turkish. The first teacher, who was a participant in the study, said that s/he does not prefer "half-English half Turkish" method since this method is likely to decrease students' motivation to follow lectures in English. Another participant stated while 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year courses are given in English, some 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year courses like Turkish History are given in Turkish. Some of the participants said that they switch to Turkish when they observe that students cannot understand the topic. One professor said that Turkish use is sometimes a pragmatic choice. For example, he uses Turkish idioms

to help students understand better. However, the presence of international students is an important factor that prevents teachers from switching to Turkish. As one of the participants foresees, maybe as the number of international students increases Turkish will be no longer used in the lessons.

The presence of international students in classes increases English use. One of the participants said that s/he allows students to use Turkish when they get very nervous. S/he translates for the international students. However, s/he does not allow them to use Turkish all the time. Another teacher said that there are a few students who always speak in Turkish and s/he translates. Two interviewees said that few students speak in the lessons. The English native-speaker participant elaborated on Turkish students' resistance to speak in English:

Foreign students, especially those coming from middle Europe, speak up. However, most Turkish students are afraid of making mistakes and they do not speak. If they want to ask questions, they ask them to my assistant, who is Turkish (they ask the questions in Turkish). They may want to talk to someone at their age.

S/he added that they ask her/him why s/he does not learn Turkish. One of his/her comments is of notice. S/he stated that when s/he addresses a question directly to a student, then that student answers the questions and others start to volunteer. This may indicate that students silence may not be simply explained by their language problems. As also indicated above, fear of making mistakes and social anxiety (lack of confidence) are some of the important factors behind students' resistance to ask questions and participate in English.

### *Faculty of Education*

One of the participants refers to an attitude problem towards English medium instruction and learning English. S/he believes that for different reasons teachers use Turkish in their courses. Sometimes the reason is that students are weak and cannot understand English. However, s/he warns about the negative impact of this attitude. S/he states that when teachers allow Turkish use, students do not have the incentive to improve their English. S/he observed that even when the textbooks are in English, instruction and some assessment can be in Turkish adding that this is a problem that has to be solved by the University Administration. Another participant said that s/he tries to encourage students to speak in English by telling them that s/he is not evaluating their English and they improve their language skills in his/her course. However, s/he said that after a point s/he gives up.

The interviewees also elaborated on why students do not want to speak in English. One of the interviewees said that strong students have a tendency to dominate and they

“terrorize” the others. S/he added that students are afraid of making mistakes and they are concerned about their accents. Two of the participants noted that freshman students are better in English than senior year students, highlighting deterioration in the level of their English. One of them said that they gradually develop a resistance. This comment is in line with the comments that students view Turkish as an accepted alternative. They seem to have developed the notion that they will not be penalized when they use Turkish.

### *Faculty of Engineering*

Eight of the faculty members pointed out their distress about the communication pattern in lectures. While the teacher use English in the lectures, students insist on using Turkish to participate. Two of the professors interviewed indicated that this way of communication and students’ resistance to use English exhaust them. There are different patterns among the teachers in terms of their Turkish use. Whereas 3 teachers said that they never use Turkish themselves, 6 indicated that they switch to Turkish when they see that students cannot follow the lecture. Some teachers refer to Turkish only to teach Turkish translations of some important terminology. Only one of the participants said that s/he does not let students use Turkish in class.

Members of the Engineering who use Turkish or allowed their students to use Turkish in the courses elaborated on why they do so. Below is a list of reasons they provided:

- *In order not to dissuade students from participating in class (2 participants).* One of the teachers indicated that when s/he forbids students from asking questions in Turkish, they stop participating altogether. S/he added that students break the teacher’s resistance to insist on an English-only policy.
- *In order to attract students’ attention.* These teachers switch to Turkish when they feel that students are losing their concentration.
- *Because students are too shy to speak in English.* These teachers believe that forcing students to speak in English is a problem because they think this puts psychological restraints on students.
- *Artificiality.* It is artificial to communicate in English in a graduate course with 3 students where everybody can speak Turkish. Another teacher said that it is pointless and inappropriate to tell senior students to switch to English.
- *University culture:* Turkish has already become an option and it is very difficult to break this habit.

- *Terminology*: Students need to know Turkish terminology so that they can do business in certain Turkish contexts.

Teachers also shared their views on why students do not want to communicate in English. Below there is a list of reasons they provided:

- Culturally, students are shy in asking questions be it in English or Turkish. They fear if their question is stupid, they will lose face in front of their teachers and friends. Students are not confident about speaking in public.
- Students find it artificial to speak in English in a context where everybody can understand Turkish.
- Students fear making mistakes.
- Students know their speaking in Turkish is accepted.
- It is easier to communicate in Turkish.
- *Peer pressure*: Students with good English may not want to look snobbish.

### **Instructional Techniques and Assessment Practices in the Faculties**

#### *Faculty of Architecture*

Jury presentations (in the studio lessons), homework, project work, exams, report writing are commonly used assessment practices. In assessment, students do not lose points for language mistakes. However, language problems that prevent them from expressing themselves at times limit the content and therefore they end up losing points.

#### *Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

##### *Social Sciences*

In the Department of Psychology, most of the exams are multiple-choice exams due to the large class sizes. The professor added that in universities abroad essay format questions are widely used. At METU, such questions are used mostly at the graduate level. The professor said that s/he sometimes allows students to use dictionaries in the exams but students still have problems. In the pilot study, another participant from the same department told us that students ask so many questions in the exam that in the exams s/he uses PP slides defining words.

The professor from the Department of History spends a lot of time correcting students' language mistakes. S/he even focuses on students' pronunciation mistakes. In the

exams and homework, students do not lose points for language mistakes. In the exams, s/he underlines the mistakes.

In the Department of Sociology, exams, homework and presentations are commonly used. The professor said that because of the possibility of cheating, s/he does not allow students to use dictionaries in the exams and added that unfortunately cheating is a common problem. S/he explained that students ask the meaning of words during the exams, and s/he answers all the questions. Students can ask very simple words like “miras” (inheritance/heritage) and “huzurevi” (rest/nursing/residential home). In an exam, there was the sentence “workers were laid off”, and none of the students knew the meaning of the word “laid off”. S/he gave information about the essay type questions used in the department. They no longer use the “unlimited time, unlimited paper” essay questions. She said that the student quota has risen to 85 from 40, and this is one reason why the old format is no longer feasible. However, s/he shared his/her criticism of such essay exams indicating that in those exams, teachers pick up the relevant parts in a student’s essay. The essays are now one question and the length of the answer is limited to one page. S/he warns students that irrelevant answers will not get points. The interviewee pointed out a common tendency among the students to mislead the teacher in the exams. Some students who do not know the answer paraphrase the stem of the question and write it as the answer. According to the teachers, the student who does this is testing whether the teacher is checking the answers carefully or not. After the exams, the professor holds a feedback session and gives feedback on common mistakes and attitude problems like the one explained above. These sessions take approximately 25 minutes. S/he commented that students who do the assigned readings are more successful in the exams. Their content and vocabulary are better. Other students’ answers are from the teacher’s lectures and his/her examples and vocabulary.

The participant from the Department of Philosophy stated that in the exams, s/he uses English texts and quotations. S/he gives 2 midterm and one final exams. There are four essay questions in the exams. S/he said that there are plenty of papers to grade. S/he pointed out that there are basic problems like capitalizing the proper nouns. S/he said “there are students who continue to use the verb ‘exit’ incorrectly”. When grading, s/he focuses on mistakes that reveal that students have not learnt the subject. Unless the mistake is a vital one, s/he does not focus on English. In the exams, s/he lets students write one sentence in Turkish when it is a key sentence. However, this is not something that happens often. S/he said that students come and see their exam papers and added that in the past, more students used to come to see their papers. The participant indicated that there are teachers who have students make

presentations. However, s/he thinks that presentations may not be very effective in classes with 50 students. S/he said “while one of them is talking about something, another one is looking out the window.”

#### *Natural Sciences*

In the Department of Mathematics, the most common assessment type is exams. In the exams, there are two parts: problem solution and explanation. In the Department of Statistics, exams, report writing and project work are used. One of the interviewees from the Department of Physics (PHYS 1) reported that s/he uses presentations and report writing in the elective course s/he teaches. The other professor (PHYS 2) said that s/he does not give a lot of homework. S/he said that students can get help in homework and they use the Internet. In PHYS 400, a compulsory course in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of their program, students have a graduation project. They prepare a presentation and a report. Students get very nervous in presentations. In order to help students to overcome their anxiety, the teacher asks them to present their project first in his/her office. The students give individual presentations in front of a jury and answer their questions. They are not allowed to switch to Turkish. Fifty per cent of their grade is for content, and the fifty per cent is for presentation and report. The process (meetings, deadlines) is also important. The participant believes that this course is very useful for students. In the PhD courses, students make presentations at the end of the semester. The professor is pleased with the presentations and the way students use power point.

In the Department of Chemistry, in the elective courses students do lab work and have poster presentations. As a department, they do not prefer to use multiple choice exams and use this format only in the service lessons. S/he pointed out the inauthenticity of multiple-choice tests and said “our students need to write and think; life does not offer multiple-choice options”. The English students use in their answers to open-ended questions is “OK”. In open-book exams, students are expected to write their own interpretations.

In the Department of Biology, in their first and second years, students write lab reports. In years 3 and 4, in addition to lab reports, there are presentations and projects. They are given a template for the lab reports. The Department places importance on the originality of the lab reports. For instance, in BIO 101 lab, students are expected to upload their reports onto Turnitin. S/he notes that students’ handwriting is illegible. This is partly because they are used to typing. However, the department does not have the logistics to give computer-based exams. In the exams, “fill in the blanks”, “multiple-choice”, and “matching” are the most commonly used test types. Ten per cent of the exams are essay type. There is a half-page essay question and three short answer questions. Students do not switch to Turkish in

writing. Some students do not attempt essay questions. In year 2, they read articles and give 10-15 minute presentations. S/he underlined the class size problem in the obligatory courses saying that sometimes there are 70 students in a class. S/he said that it is not possible to give essay exams under these conditions. In elective courses, class size is not a problem. The capacity of elective courses is determined by the teachers.

The professor from the Department of Mathematics explained that students do not lose points for language mistakes if the calculation and the content of the explanation are accurate. S/he also said that from time to time students fail to cite the sources they use in their homework and that they do not lose points if the content is not problematic. In the Calculus course, it is a tradition to show exam papers to students and students who come to see their papers can see their mistakes. PHYS 1 stated that s/he corrects the serious language mistakes in students' reports. S/he said teachers should not correct all the mistakes since this can discourage them. S/he added that it is more than enough if the student can explain his/her point briefly/clearly ("meramını anlatsın yeter"). The professor from the Department of Chemistry reported that s/he sometimes corrected the language mistakes in students' papers; however, when they do not come to see their mistakes, they cannot see the corrections.

#### *Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*

Three of the professors focused on the importance they attach to developing students' reading skills. One of them explained how s/he structured a survey course s/he teaches:

Students are supposed to read a lot of different styles and work by different writers. Readings vary in difficulty and are at university level. They are adults. We have reading recitations. They are pushed to read. They are given a quiz. They read 2 articles a week (20-40 pages). Some texts are more difficult than others. Some readings go into deeper detail or supplement the lectures somehow, or even present a different viewpoint. At any rate, the readings are not simply a repetition of lectures. They are expected to get the main idea and supporting ideas. Some teachers have a textbook and take it to the class and read it. I don't do it.

Another participant reported that quite a number of students do not do the assigned readings and explained how s/he tries out different methods to push students to read. S/he assigns reading texts to groups and the groups study the texts before class. In class, they first go over the main topics together and this is followed by a discussion. Another professor said that s/he is against coursebooks with simplified English and wants the students to read the primary sources. S/he added that once students get used to the concepts and vocabulary, they start to understand the texts. Another professor who also teaches engineering students

remarked that students who study in departments where they do intensive reading have relatively stronger English.

A wide range of assessment practices are used at the faculty. There are courses in which students solve mathematical problems. Reading quizzes are given for assigned readings. Students are also engaged in plenty of academic writing including reflective writing pieces (on films), paper, essay, group report, compare and contrast writing pieces, projects and research paper. Presentations, debates/ discussions and case analysis are also used. The participant from the Department of Business Administration complained that despite taking a course on presentation, their presentation skills are not satisfactory. Organization is a problem and students cannot interact with the audience. Students' failure in transferring skills from one course to another is an issue that needs further attention. To deal with the problem, s/he gives grades for interaction. The participant from the Department of International Relations mentioned a participation grade; however, there is not much information about whether this is a standard procedure in the department.

Exams are used in different formats. In the Department of Economics, depending on the course, multiple choice and short answer are commonly used test types. In such exams, minimal language use is required. However, in other courses, test types that require more production are also used. The same applies to the Department of Business Administration. The professor from the Department of International Relations said that one reason why professors choose multiple choice and short answer questions are the language problems in students' production. The teachers are reserved about essay questions because they do not understand what students try to say and this causes problems in grading. However, s/he is concerned about the negative backwash effect of using such test types. Another participant who said that s/he can understand students' answers indicated that s/he would not have done so if s/he was not Turkish. The same participant mentioned that there are students who attempt to use Turkish in essay questions. The native speaker interviewee said that the problems they face are conceptual problems as well as linguistic problems and adds that students' vocabulary is not sufficient. The participant from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration stated that in the first year exams, s/he uses scenario and descriptive essay questions. S/he added that problem-solving tasks are useful for language development. Multiple choice, essay and compare-and-contrast questions are also used. In the following years, scenario questions are used and research homework is assigned. One of the participants from the Department of Economics said that "in exams I never ask questions that can be copied (from the reading texts students had studied). I ask synthesis questions. I give

them preparation questions. This is a way to get them write as well. They are expected to discuss. You won't find the answers on page 200. This is tougher for students".

Three participants focused on the negative impact of the assessment system on the development of students' linguistic and academic skills. One of them said that there are too many exams. S/he believes that if there were time for asking students to write more and to give them more feedback, their skills would improve. Two teachers who have experience with SUNY students agree with this point. They say that students do a lot of writing in US and when they are back, they are much more successful. One of the professors focused on the importance of writing for students. According to him/her, there are not enough writing courses. S/he said "we had one writing course in the Economics Department and it has been turned into an elective". However, s/he also pointed out students' reservations about writing:

At Latin and North American Studies, at the beginning of the semester, I had 10 students. When they learnt that they would write term papers, 6 disappeared. 2 students completed the course. It is a big problem in the program. Even graduate students cannot do it. We are planning to teach them how to write term papers.

The participants said that, when grading, the focus is not on language mistakes but content. One of the interviewees said that if students lost points for all language mistakes, most of them would fail. Another warned about the salience of checking student work very carefully since at times good language can be misleading. Some students have a good command of language and write pages but the content is unsatisfactory. On the other hand, some other students know the answer but cannot express themselves due to language problems. One of the professors said that sometimes students want to write their answers in Turkish and s/he does not let the student make this a habit.

### *Faculty of Education*

One of the participants said that s/he uses reflective writing tasks. S/he said that these tasks help students to come to the class prepared and adds that students think that writing helps them to improve their writing skills. There are also essays, exams, a term paper and article discussions. The same teacher added that s/he also grades participation. Another teacher uses exams, projects, lesson plans, portfolios, quizzes and activity presentations.

The teachers commented about students' performance in various assessment practices. One of them said s/he is not sure how much they understand what they read. S/he said that s/he does not allow students to switch to Turkish in the exams. They can only write one or two words in Turkish. Students are allowed to use dictionaries in the exams. S/he also refuses

to answer student questions in the exam. Another participant also complained about students' using Turkish in the exams. S/he said "In a quiz, one student wrote half of the answer in Turkish, half in English. It is impossible to understand the answer".

Participants talked about the way they approach mistakes. One of them said that s/he corrects mistakes but does not take off points for these mistakes. When students make mistakes while speaking, the teacher corrects them gently by telling them that it is natural to make mistakes and none of them are native-speakers including him/herself. Another teacher said that it is impossible to correct all mistakes. His/her assistants check students' written work. The language policy in assessment is "can I understand what they want to say?".

### *Faculty of Engineering*

Consistent with the findings of the ODTU Öğrenme ve Öğrenci Gelişim Birimi OGEB (Çapa-Aydın and Yerin-Güneri, 2013) questionnaire on measurement and evaluation in undergraduate education at METU, midterm and final exams, homework and project work are commonly used assessment practices in the Faculty of Engineering. However, classroom participation was not mentioned at all by the participants. They reported that presentations are used mainly in the junior and senior years and in elective courses. Team presentations are commonly used and in some cases one student represents the whole group. Report writing is the most commonly used writing format at the Engineering Faculty. The reports students write include lab, summer practice, and project reports and seem to show slight differences in format. Overall, teachers believe that students are not good at report writing unless there is a database they can reproduce. Organization and language problems make it difficult to read the reports. The format for report writing is given in the departments and students work on templates. The professor from the Department of Metallurgical and Material Engineering reported that the Department is considering a third year course on report writing. The participant from the Department of Environmental Engineering said that it could be helpful if senior year students who are preparing their project work (ENVE 407-408) could use the SFL-Academic Writing Centre (AWC).

Overall, two types of questions are used in the midterm and final exam: problems that require students to do mathematical calculations and concept questions which require students to define, describe, explain and discuss concepts. Generally, the length of the expected response varies from one sentence to a paragraph. Much longer answers are expected in some rare cases as well. The balance of these questions seems to vary from course to course and from department to department. In some exams, students use English at

a minimal level. Teachers who use open-ended concept questions stated students dread such questions and some do not even attempt to answer these questions. As for the English used when answering these questions, teachers made different comments. There are teachers who stated that the English is so poor that it is impossible to understand the answer whereas others indicated that most of the time they can understand the answers. One teacher said that there are students who answer the question in Turkish and write “sorry”, or draw pictures and figures when they cannot express themselves in English. On the other hand, another teacher stated that they never experience such problems. Surprisingly, the illegibility of students’ handwriting was also mentioned by some of the participants. In some departments, multiple-choice, true-false and short-answer formats are also used.

Two of the participants stated that students ask questions about the terms in the exams. While one of the instructors complained that they are asking questions about terms that they should already know, the other indicated that they are asking questions about unfamiliar terms. Two of the teachers indicated that it is also possible that the questions themselves are not well-written (complex language or unclear problem). However, overall it was stated that the way exam questions are formulated is not a major obstacle for students. Two professors pointed out that students have a tendency to beat around the bush rather than answer the question. They provide irrelevant answers to the question. Possible reasons are given as not reading the instructions, missing the focus of the question, the tendency to write down whatever they know about the topic and the tendency to write memorized answers. This links to the comment about the challenge students face when dealing with original questions.

In relation to presentations, two instructors state that they are satisfactory since students practice and rehearse for the presentations. Also, in some cases, one student whose English is strong represents the whole group. One of the academicians stated that students are also assessed for presentation technique, and they lose points if they read aloud from a text during their presentations. Another indicated that students are graded also for language and organization in their presentations. However, it is not possible to make generalizations about the rubrics used to grade presentations.

Cheating in assignments by copying from the Internet or other students was also reported to be a problem. The tendency to memorize the answers to the questions asked in class or previous years and students’ inability to cope with original questions is also a concern. One of the teachers reiterated the importance of breaking the habits students bring

from their previous educational experience. S/he stated that some students still race against time rather than take the time to express themselves clearly and engage in deep thinking.

Most of the teachers expressed their frustration with the amount of mistakes in student work. Some indicated that earlier in their career, they try to help students to correct their mistakes; however, gradually, they give up due to time constraints. Another teacher said that s/he prefers making the corrections himself/herself although s/he knows that going over the mistakes through a process approach with students might be more useful. Other teachers also indicated that there is not enough time to give feedback on the mistakes.

Most of the teachers focus on technical knowledge in student work and language mistakes are tolerated at different levels. Some teachers tolerate mistakes that do not lead to misunderstandings. One of the participants said that s/he is not sure if an outsider and/or a native speaker could understand the sentences/ texts students produce.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of the students**

#### *Faculty of Architecture*

The interviewees reported that academic writing is a challenge for students. They find it difficult to organize their work into introduction, body and conclusion and to arrive at a conclusion. Copying and pasting texts from the Internet and failing to cite sources are also problems. One of the participants stated that students who plagiarize lose points and/or are asked to rewrite. Overall, compared to the previous years, students are more successful in presentations. One of the interviewees said that although reading skills are satisfactory, students' speaking skills are a problem. It is also stated that language problems prevent students from expressing themselves clearly in the exams. Similarly, students who have a good command of English express themselves more comfortably in presentations.

#### *Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

##### *Social Sciences*

The interviewee from the Department of Mathematics said that there is an overall decrease in students' level (due to the lowering of the admission score) and this has a role in their performance. S/he thinks that students find it difficult to express themselves. They sometimes ask their questions in Turkish. S/he hopes that they understand what they read. S/he added that students do not have study skills. The participant from the Department of Statistics indicated that s/he had talked about students' weak points with other academic staff members who teach freshman level. They agree that students are better with numbers than

words. They find it difficult to transfer information from words to table and from table to words. In the exams, they have problems with understanding written texts. It is a challenge for students to write a few sentences of interpretation at the end of mathematical operations. S/he indicated that the focus is on knowledge of statistics rather than language and organization. S/he also observed that students are reserved about communicating with international students, and s/he thinks that this is because of students' language problems. S/he said that international students are left alone. In order to help them to integrate, s/he uses pair work. S/he shared an experience s/he had in the library. An international student needed some help and the librarian did not have the English skills to help the students. Other students around the international student backed away rather than offering help. In the end, s/he helped the international student.

One of the professors from the Department of Physics said that students who come from colleges (private schools that provide English language education at the secondary level) are good but students coming from DBE are insufficient. S/he added that they do not use dictionaries. The other professor stated that freshman students have problems with terminology; however, by their junior year, this problem is solved. S/he said that for the first time in his/her career, s/he has become an advisor for freshman students. His/her advisees had told him/her that they do not understand chemistry. S/he said "Probably there is more English in chemistry compared to physics". Students have problems with "daily English". Their vocabulary is limited. They cannot construct proper sentences in the exams. When writing about a process, they cannot explain how they move from one stage to another. Even in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year, their English is problematic. Sometimes there are students who write in Turkish and in parenthesis they write "kusura bakmayın Hocam İngilizcesi'ni bulamadım" [I'm sorry but I could not find the English equivalence]. The professor added that it is not reasonable to expect students to become perfect by studying English for 1- 1.5 years. S/he believes in the importance of living abroad for mastering language skills. In terms of strengths, the professor reported that students can communicate in English with international teachers and students.

The participant from the Department of Chemistry believes that students would be unsuccessful if they asked the questions they used to ask 20 years ago. S/he observes that there is an overall laziness. On the other hand, they are more successful at using the Internet and keeping up with the world. Therefore, s/he is of the contention that "the new generation is capable of surprising us". S/he indicated that students are good at guessing vocabulary but they are seldom interested in learning the meaning of new words.

### *Natural Sciences*

The participant from the Department of Biology shared his/her classification of students in terms of their language abilities. S/he divided them into three categories. In the first group, there are the gifted students who are naturally talented at learning a language. They learn quickly and enjoy learning a language. There is one such student in a group of fifty students. The second group is more crowded and composed of students who are not gifted but can learn the language by practising. Three-fifths of the class is composed of these students. They can ask questions and express themselves in half English and half Turkish. The third group, 2/5 of the class, is lost. They do not have any talent for language. They are weak in their first language as well.

### *Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*

Students' lack of motivation is a recurrent theme in the interviews. One of the participants highlighted the fact that students do not make conscious choices and they may be studying in departments they are not interested in. Another professor also complained about students' behavioural problems. She said:

Students want to come to METU for status and prestige and that's all. They say that "Once you go to ODTU, your troubles are over." Indeed, the trouble has just started. Getting in is something, getting out is something else.

S/he also indicated that "students view English as a weird sign language that is used to teach in this place". Two professors indicated that the level of students is gradually deteriorating. They are less motivated and they read less. However, the participant from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration (PADM) said "maybe this year students are better". Overall, all the participants have concerns about students' language and academic skills.

The majority of the participants seem to agree that reading skills are relatively stronger compared to other skills; however, it is not possible to conclude that there is a consensus. While one of the professors from the Department of Economics (ECON 1) said that speaking and understanding spoken language are the greatest problems, the other teacher from the same department (ECON 2) reported that there are problems in all the four skills. It should be noted in ECON 1, students are mostly engaged in mathematical operations, and they do not do much writing. Still s/he reported that when they are expected to write from time to time, there are serious language mistakes in their work. S/he also complained about

students' obsession with writing very long sentences that hinder understanding. The professor from the Department of Business Administration (BA) first said that reading skills are OK, but then added one cannot always be sure how much students understand what they read. There are students who copy chunks, and they may do this without understanding. On the other hand, s/he said that their listening skills are good. S/he uses a lot of videos and rarely are there students who cannot understand. S/he adds that culturally foreign parts may not be understood. PADM reported that the vocabulary, concepts and text structure hinder students' reading comprehension when reading and added that s/he talks about these problems with the students.

BA indicated that s/he taught the same course in England; however, at METU, s/he cannot give the same course in the same way. S/he cannot make students read articles. Students are weak in critical reading skills. S/he thinks that students have some ideas but they do not have the language to express these ideas. It should be noted that not all teachers agree that students have ideas in the first place. Another professor said that they may not have the background to perform these academic tasks in their native language.

Poor reading habits, not doing the assigned readings and not following current news are raised as issues. Academic writing skills, creating and supporting an argument, citation, writing compare and contrast paragraphs, criticizing, synthesizing, extended writing, using juvenile vocabulary, writing a term paper, speaking, understanding and using academic language and effective dictionary use are among the reported problems. ADM 4 said "many or even most students lack vocabulary, grammar, and basic academic skills such as the ability to write clear sentences or paragraphs, or present ideas in a logical sequence". According to him/her, students' weaknesses are partly linked to their educational background. "They do not learn academic skills in high school, or have a clue about thinking 'out of the box'."

The majority of the participants agree that helping students to become critical thinkers is an important educational goal. As ADM 4 put forward, students should become thinking citizens:

We need to get rid of this "medrese mentality". By "medrese mentality"-- I simply meant the repetition of knowledge or information without understanding what it means. There tends to be a good deal of that among the students.

At this faculty, communication with international students is not reported as a problem. ECON 1 says that Turkish students socialize with their international friends

The professor who teaches courses to different departments in the Faculty of Education said that students who are good in English are good in other courses as well. Students from the departments of Physics Education and Chemistry Education have weaker English. This is probably because to a great extent they deal with numbers in their departments. The same teacher indicated that students have the intelligence and ideas but lack the language skills to express their ideas. They cannot synthesize. English is a barrier in front of them.

Another interviewee stated that students' written and oral expression are weak. S/he added that s/he reads their written work by thinking "they must have meant this". They have problems with terminology. Students avoid speaking as much as possible. Compared to other skills, reading is OK. S/he said "there are a lot of students from the Anatolian Teacher Training Schools and they also have a prep year in those schools". S/he added that they do not have "upper intermediate" students. S/he also touched on students' low motivation. S/he said that students do not have a positive approach to English lessons. They do not think they can learn English. They complain about the amount of homework. They see English as something dreadful they have to deal with. In these cases, s/he reminds the students of the fact that they chose to come to METU knowing that it is an English medium school. In his/her experience, international students have strong Turkish and Turkish students use Turkish to communicate with them as well.

### *Faculty of Engineering*

The participants agree that students' level of English and academic abilities vary considerably. Educational and family background are reported to be the possible reasons for this difference. Some of the teachers also reported that students who went abroad on an Erasmus student exchange program usually benefit from this experience. Below, students' weaknesses as observed by their professors are reported.

Lack of motivation is observed in different student behaviour ranging from playing with mobile phones to not taking notes in class. Some of the teachers indicated that some students do not want to study English and/or their priority is not English. Lack of reading habits was also stated to be a problem. Some of the participants stated that students do not even buy the coursebooks, but photocopy the problems and calculations from the books.

In addition to incompetency in using basic English structures like passive voice and tenses correctly, teachers observe deficiencies in certain academic skills. Overall, students are believed to have less difficulty in reading compared to the other language skills. Among the

teachers who compare writing and speaking skills, the majority believe that speaking is the most problematic skill. Some of the participants complained about students' tendency to write very long sentences that end up being incorrect and/or difficult to understand and highlighted the importance of focusing on clarity in expression. The academic skills mentioned by the faculty members include planning, composing an organized piece of work, reviewing, setting a problem (as compared to solving it), time management, reading graphics and critical thinking.

Confidence issues which are discussed earlier in the report also emerged as a recurrent theme. Some of the teachers pointed out that students do not have general English knowledge and skills to carry out daily life tasks and socialize. This comment is important since most of the teachers who were METU graduates stated that they suffered from this lack and bridged the gap during the years they spent abroad. Some of the professors said that because of their insecurity some students do not communicate with foreign students.

### **Scaffolding and encouraging participation**

In the interviews, the participants shared information regarding how they support students when they see that they are having difficulties with English and they encourage students to participate in English.

#### *Faculty of Architecture*

Switching to Turkish and/or allowing students to switch to Turkish are mentioned as strategies used when students are challenged.

#### *Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

##### *Social Sciences*

Switching to Turkish or allowing them to do so seems to be the most commonly used strategy when students are challenged. One of the teachers stated that s/he uses PP to help students to follow the lessons. Another participant stated that s/he makes fun of himself/herself when s/he makes mistakes giving the message that everybody can make mistakes. There are also uncommon methods. For example, the professor from the Department of History uses the read-aloud method to help students improve their pronunciation.

##### *Natural Sciences*

One of the interviewees elaborated on how s/he motivates students and encourages participation. S/he pointed out the importance of making the lessons interesting for students. S/he referred to a seminar on active learning and learner-centred education she attended at METU. The training was conducted by two professors (Richard Felder and Rebecca Brant). S/he said that s/he benefited from the seminar in shaping the way s/he teaches. The strategies s/he has learnt and applied include limiting the length of teacher lectures, asking questions to students and having students work in groups. S/he added that lecturing 50 minutes is not an effective way of helping students learn. On the other hand, s/he acknowledges the difficulty in implementing a learner-centred methodology for the teacher. There is a lot of class work and they need to be graded. However, s/he believes that his/her methodology is effective and appreciated by students.

#### *Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*

The participants from Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences shared a number of strategies they use for scaffolding:

- arranging reading groups: Students read and discuss the assigned reading before class in groups; they help each other understand; the teacher asks questions about group work; this increases class participation and also helps them build relationships.
- Group work in class: Students discuss in small groups before class discussions
- identifying words in the texts that can be difficult for students
  - having strong and experienced students (Erasmus students) present first
  - speaking clearly, paraphrasing
  - explaining in Turkish
  - using ice-breakers (e.g. talking about things of common interest-e.g. football)
  - talking about challenges of reading academic texts, helping students with vocabulary and concepts when reading texts.

#### *Faculty of Education*

EDU 1 listed a number of things s/he does to help students:

- slowing down the pace
- using PowerPoint presentations (summary & plain English)
- preparing note-taking sheets (with sentence completion) for freshman students
- avoiding using difficult words in the exams.

- switching to Turkish.

### *Faculty of Engineering*

The practices used by the professors at the Faculty of Engineering include:

- switching to Turkish
- informing students that they can follow the Turkish translations of the coursebook
- informing students that they can read the topics from other sources which explain it in a simpler way
- mixing foreign and Turkish students in group work
- using plain and clear English
- speaking slowly
- paraphrasing
- guiding students on how to study
- adjusting the level of English in the exam
- reviewing important terminology in class
- writing important terminology on the board
- integrating technology in class
- providing report format and samples
- giving feedback without a grade for the first student report
- supporting the lessons with PowerPoint presentations

### **English for Specific Purposes (ESP)**

Faculty members expressed their views on ESP approach to teaching academic English.

### *Faculty of Architecture*

One of the participants stated that ESP can be given in addition to general English and EAP courses and said that s/he would be interested in team teaching an ESP course with a teacher from MLD (ARCH 1). The other professor believes that ESP may be motivating and beneficial for students. She explained that when s/he was a student, in the English lessons s/he read texts about the history of architecture and did homework about field-related topics and found this useful and motivating. It was stated that whether there is a need for an ESP course teaching field-related terminology can be further discussed with the faculty.

## *Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

### *Social Sciences*

The participant from the Department of Psychology is not in favour of ESP. S/he said texts used in the introduction lessons can be used in ENG 101-102 lessons. However, texts from popular psychology magazines can be too challenging. Similarly, the professor from the Department of History indicated that in the reading pack, MLD can include texts about history.

The professor from the Department of Sociology thinks that ESP would be good but should be given by the department teachers. S/he said “if students learnt some basic terminology in the advanced stages in DBE, it would be very helpful”. S/he explained how introduction courses are taught in rotation and suggested that a rotation system can be implemented in ESP courses. S/he gave the example of ESP courses taught at Yıldız University. In relation to the topics to be dealt with in English courses, she made a few suggestions. She said as eventually all students will work, topics about work can be relevant to all of them. Students can read texts about work, family and gender. According to him/her, students should not limit themselves to only one discipline. The professor from the Department of Philosophy indicated that to design an ESP course SFL teachers and teachers from the Department of Philosophy need to cooperate.

### *Natural Sciences*

The interviewee said that Department of Mathematics cannot open an ESP course. On the other hand, s/he supports the use of reading texts which include basic terminology in the English lessons. S/he believes that reading scientific texts will be more motivating for students.

The participant from the Department of Statistics acknowledged that the language needs of social and natural sciences are different; however, s/he does not think that an ESP course would be meaningful. Undergraduate students rarely read articles. S/he said that short report writing, reading and interpreting tables and transferring a reading piece to a table are among the important needs of students from the Department of Statistics.

The first professor from the Department of Physics was against ESP on the grounds that general English is more essential for students. On the other hand, the second professor, PHYS 2, was positive about ESP. He explained that when he was a prep student, he took a course titled Technical English, which was designed to teach terminology for science and mathematics related fields. The course was taught by an American teacher who also had

technical background knowledge. S/he added that there are common terms in physics, chemistry and engineering, and it is important to teach terminology both in Turkish and English. In the department, they do not have time to teach terminology effectively. S/he also said that s/he would volunteer to help about the content, if such a technical English course were offered. There are some notes to make about these two interviews. First of all, although one of the teachers is against the idea of ESP, both of them agree that general English is a problem for students. Later in the interview, PHYS 2 said that it would be helpful if SFL could offer “daily English” courses in the 3rd and 4<sup>th</sup> year. In addition, the same professor said that students master terminology in years 3 and 4. Therefore, based on the two interviews, it is not possible to conclude that ESP is what PHYS students need.

The professor from the Department of Chemistry does not think that ESP is a good idea. S/he said that the Department of Chemistry also receives demands for specific chemistry education for different departments; however, their aim is to teach general chemistry. According to him, reading a story by O. Henry may be more useful for students than studying English for Chemistry. S/he added that the result of learning English from chemistry courses is communication skills that cannot go beyond the chemistry textbooks.

The participant from the Department of Biology is another professor who underlines that the language of social sciences is different from the language of natural sciences. S/he believes that students majoring in social sciences might need to do more intensive language work. S/he said that there is no need to separate the language for biology from the language for engineering. She said “the language of science is simple. Past tense, present tense, passive...It is a plain language”. According to him/her, BIO students should be given simple popular science texts and stated that s/he can make suggestions for ENG 101-102 reading packs. S/he believes that reading literary texts would demotivate them. She indicated that in their field language is a means not an end and added that they use language to talk about scientific findings and formulations.

#### *Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*

The two professors from the Department of Economics were unsure about ESP. ECON 1 said that under the present conditions it might be a waste of time and energy. ECON 2 said that the course s/he teaches is already like an ESP course. S/he added that what students need is the general upgrading level of language:

Students can be given real situations. “What would you do if you were in a foreign country and you got ill?”. Then they can transpose this vocabulary. They can read

things like history, current events... I am pushing them to read. They do not read newspapers.

The participants from the departments of International Relations and Business Administration were in favour of ESP. Both stated that social science requires students to engage more deeply in language compared to engineering sciences. However, one of them (BA) also said that they already have problems in finding teachers to teach the present ESP courses (BUS COM) at the department and are considering dropping one of these courses and asking students to take ENG 211 instead. The teachers who will teach the ESP courses are expected to have some background in the field. What is more, the academic skills covered in the present ENG 101 and 102 lessons are quite in line with the skills these departments expect students to develop and use. Under these conditions, it seems making certain modifications following the research participants' suggestions in the present courses may be more plausible than switching to an ESP approach. The participants emphasized the importance of reading and following news for students. PADM said that students are good at reading and it is the teacher's responsibility to help with vocabulary and concepts.

#### *Faculty of Education*

One of the interviewees from the Faculty of Education (EDU 1) stated that ESP can be beneficial for students. Another (EDU 3) said that s/he does not believe a course which only teaches terminology would be useful. The topics should be contextualized and this requires knowledge of mathematics. S/he indicated that topics about mathematics education may be relevant to all students. S/he gave the example of a text criticising math education as a text that may appeal to most students. She said that she is willing to offer texts for ENG 101-102 reading packs.

#### *Faculty of Engineering*

Thirteen of the eighteen participants from the Faculty of Engineering stated that ESP is not necessary. Three of them said ESP might be useful and one stated that it would be useful. The analysis of the data from the academicians who were sceptical of an ESP approach revealed three recurring major themes: teaching technical English is the department's responsibility and is done there (12), SFL should focus on improving students' general English skills (8), and engineering education should be multi-dimensional (6). One of the teachers who stated that terminology should be taught at the departments added that

students also get bored when they have to study terminology all the time. Another said that students gradually learn field-specific terminology in English at the departments and the main challenge for them is not field-specific terminology in English but Turkish terminology.

The faculty members who highlighted the importance of improving students' general English skills focused on the transferability of skills. One of them indicated the salience of the ability to write an essay/ composition and how this is lacking in the education system. Another said that English is a background and the terminology can vary from field to field but with a strong background students can cope with the terms. A third academician pointed out the importance of helping students to express themselves as part of the basic English education. Another teacher highlighted the possible limitations of an ESP approach and warned against the risk that students may not be able to follow general English used in daily life. The teachers who referred to multi-dimensional education made the following comments:

“Computer engineers work in different sectors and they will need to work with people in these sectors”.

“Indeed, ESP can be beneficial for students' professional life, but if you work for 8-10 hours, you are a social individual for the rest of the time”.

Four of the participants further stressed the importance of “daily/ social English” for students. “Daily/ social English is a problem: making a phone call, renting a flat, getting off a bus. Speaking is very important. Social English is very different from technical English. One teacher's comment summarizes the general concern about ESP:

What will you teach for 14 weeks in an English for Industrial Engineering course? Perhaps there may be a couple of seminars. But then why will you give these seminars? Faculty teachers can prepare and give such seminars with the help of the MLD teachers.

One of the faculty members who stated that ESP may help still believed it was not feasible since there are too many different departments. However, two other teachers were more positive. One commented that English for Engineers shows little variation from field to field and another said although the terminology in the Environmental Engineering may be specific, terminology used in Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering may benefit all the engineering students.

As indicated above, one of the participants stated s/he would prefer an ESP approach. This participant was from the Department of Computer Engineering, but the other participant from the same department did not think that ESP is necessary.

During the interviews, teachers came up with suggestions as to what can be done to help students to better perform in their departments. Below, there is a list of suggestions made about the reading topics by the participants:

- Reading lists should include more technical texts than texts about social issues
- Students can read texts to raise awareness about topics like ethics, job security, and conservation
- Energy, alternative energy, sustainability, basic laws of nature, interesting engineering applications, and biographies of important scientists may appeal to students from different departments.

The participants made further comments about how to improve the content of the courses taught by MLD:

- The language taught at MLD courses may be revised to be more akin to the language of engineering
- More general skills like how to read an article and how to conduct an experiment can be taught. They may be asked to read texts from various disciplines (short and intense texts like the ones used in the YDS exam).
- A couple of technical writing samples can be added to the courses.
- How to write a report can be taught.

Some of the academicians also pointed out some student related factors that may prevent them from being successful in performing departmental tasks. Some of the students do not work hard enough to be successful. They do not follow the lessons carefully and do not read. Some students are weak at time management and do not devote a sufficient amount of time to writing their reports. It was suggested that if the level of their general English and academic skills can be improved, they may better deal with departmental tasks. These comments are in line with the other comments made about the general student profile.

## **Graduate Education**

*Faculty of Architecture*

The participants from the Faculty of Architecture did not make any specific comments about graduate education at METU.

#### *Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

##### *Social Sciences*

The participants from the social sciences division of Faculty of Arts and Sciences did not make any specific comments about graduate education at METU.

##### *Natural Sciences*

In the interviews, only the professor from the Department of Statistics made a specific comment about graduate education. S/he stated that students have problems in making interpretations even when writing their thesis. She said “They are drowned in numbers and the interpretations are limited”. There are not language problems but they have problems in organization. In order to help students, s/he gives them a research manual and also directs them to SFL-Academic Writing Centre (AWC).

#### *Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*

Two of the participants commented on graduate education. One of the participants from the Department of Economics (ECON 1) pointed out that English is a problem in MA theses. Some students pay to get their thesis edited. The language of the work is too poor to make it to the jury. S/he stated that PhD students should be challenged more. There are students who get AA in the course, and yet cannot pass the qualification exam. In the qualification exam, under time pressure, they cannot use English effectively. S/he has been supervising 19 graduate students, and it is not possible to correct each one’s language mistakes because if a supervisor focuses on language, s/he spends less time with the content. Students do not use the SFL-Academic Writing Center effectively enough. When they consult the AWC at the last minute, it is not of much use. Students who use AWC weekly benefit more. S/he believes that AWC has a great role in students’ education. The professor from the Department of Business Administration indicated that in their Master’s program students from the departments of Sociology and Psychology are more successful in expressing themselves.

#### *Faculty of Education*

One of the professors (EDU 3) commented on the graduate level education and said that there are serious language problems at the graduate level.

#### *Faculty of Engineering*

At the Faculty of Engineering, the deficiencies in students' language proficiency and in academic skills challenge the faculty members at the graduate level courses as well. One of the participants indicated that some students are so weak that s/he cannot understand the texts they produce, and added that these students are those who have already passed the language proficiency exam. One of the professors who was content with the masters and PhD students said that their admission requirements to the graduation program are high.

Writing a thesis is reported to be a major challenge for weak students. However, two instructors pointed out that language problems in thesis papers do not necessarily prevent them from being approved. One of the participants stated that in addition to language skills, organization and presentation skills are lacking. To illustrate, some students do the literature review but they do not know how to link citations and make a critical review. They cannot present their thesis/ work. He added that these problems turn into a bigger concern when the work is to become a publication. Abstract writing was a problem raised by another participant. Some of the professors said that they guide their students to get assistance from the AWC. Overall, the participants indicated that they were content with the service provided by the AWC. Some teachers commented on the desirability of a course on research skills course at the graduate program.

#### **Expectations from and suggestion to SFL**

During the interviews, the participants shared some of their comments on the education provided by SFL. It should be noted that when expressing views the majority of the participants also drew on their experience as language learners and METU graduates.

#### *Faculty of Architecture*

Using texts about architecture in the reading pack was one of the suggestions for MLD. The participants emphasised the importance of improving students' academic writing skills.

#### *Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

##### *Social Sciences*

The professors' expectations from and suggestions to SFL are listed below:

- focusing on grammar and writing in DBE  
“If grammar and writing can be taught well in prep and speaking can be sorted out at MLD, then we can engage in reading history in its true sense in HIST-113-114”.  
(HIST)
- focusing on the fact that APA and Chicago Style are different. Students get confused  
(HIST).
- teaching how to write a proposal to graduate students (SOC).
- focusing on speaking (SOC).  
“Building confidence is the key. They can speak on daily topics. There is a big gap between students' proficiency level. There could be a speaking course. There are students who had never spoken in English before”
- focusing on academic misconduct (SOC).  
“Students pretend that they do not know what plagiarism is.”  
“When they know that teachers check the exam papers and homework carefully, the cheating incidents decrease.”

The participant from the Department of Philosophy indicated that it is unnecessary to extend the prep education to two years saying “students will have to enter the market one year later because of a language they probably will never use”

#### *Natural Sciences*

The participants' expectations from and suggestions for SFL are listed below:

- observing classes to gain better insight into students' needs (MATH)
- focusing on “daily English”. (PHYS 2)  
“As students focus on mathematics and physics in the department, they gradually lose their “daily English”. Is it not possible to offer an English course which focuses on “daily English” for 3<sup>rd</sup> year students?
- scheduling weekly movie hours (BIO)
- expressing things using their own words (BIO)
- focusing on critical thinking skills (BIO)
- focusing on logical thinking skills (BIO)
- focusing on how to be concise and to the point (BIO)

“Word economy” and “idea economy” is very important in science. If something can be expressed in three words, then the fourth word is unnecessary and it is crossed out.”

- answering the questions directly without giving irrelevant information (BIO)
- doing error correction and editing exercises (BIO)

### *Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*

The interviews revealed that professors know little about the scope and content of the courses taught at MLD. Indeed, it was seen that some of the basic academic skills taught in prep and MLD are not transferred at all. Do the students forget these skills? Do they not learn them effectively in the first place? Do they pretend that they have not learned them? One of the professors commented that “if students are learning these skills in ENG 101-102, as department teachers it is our responsibility to build on them”.

There were some comments specific to DBE. One of the participants stated that some of the teachers in the department including him/herself believe that prep education should further challenge the students. S/he is of the opinion that students are too relaxed during the prep year and find it difficult to get disciplined once they start their departments. One of the participants from the Department of Economy summarized her comments and concerns about English education at METU:

The themes can be chosen more carefully. Consumption does not seem to be a good choice. Current events, politics can be useful. Over the years I have had occasion to note this general lack of proficiency, but certain incidents stand out. In the first class of this year a student could not explain a basic Economics term—i.e. “market”—in English. Two years ago a student whose grade in my course was badly affected by her lack of English, admitted that she had passed English Proficiency Exam with a grade of sixty per cent, and that sixty per cent on a multiple choice exam was all that was required in order to pass. Another student informed me that class attendance at preparatory school was not enforced. This is clearly inadequate. Just before the opening of the current term, a colleague who teaches first year students informed me that in the previous year, a student had asked her, “Hocam, is it normal that I only understand about sixty per cent of what you say?” While these are isolated incidents they are symptomatic and representative of a wider problem. I used to be acquainted with an English teacher who worked in the prep school (she has since left), and she informed me that the subject matter and vocabulary of lessons revolved around consumerism, tourism, and hanging around with one’s friends. This is hardly the kind of subject matter which forms a good background for university-level study.

His/ her comments overlap with comments by the other participants from this faculty and other faculties, and should be evaluated by SFL. Below there is a list of suggestions by the interviewees:

- More focus on speaking (ECON 1) (PADM 5)
- More focus on critical reading: The idea that the written texts do not reflect absolute truth. Developing a critical stance towards the writer of the text. There is not a single truth in social sciences (IR)
- Reading magazines and newspapers; they need to be aware of what is going on around the world (IR)
- Increasing the variety of texts (students do not know what “public” means) (PADM)
- Making students read non-academic opinion texts (blogs, newspaper columns) (PADM 5)
- Organizing conversation clubs (PADM)
- Asking students to watch authentic programs: stand-up shows, the news, e.g. Larry King, YouTube videos (PADM )
- Teaching them how to ask questions with confidence (PADM )
- Teaching how to study English (PADM)
- Cooperating with social clubs (PADM)
- Moving away from the high school English curriculum (PADM)
- Teaching academic topics (ECON 2)

### *Faculty of Education*

The participants from the Faculty of Education made the following comments:

- Teaching how to read between the lines (EDU 3)
- Focusing on paraphrasing, summarizing and plagiarism (EDU 3)
- Introducing a lesson which focuses on mainly speaking in the prep school (EDU 3)
- Encouraging students to take ENG 311, which most of the students are content with (EDU 3)
- Encouraging students to read more:  
“Students do not read Turkish books as well. This is not only the responsibility of MLD”. S/he considers adding books to his/her syllabus & assessing reading and thinks “if they read, they will be able to write”.

- Using reading texts about popular topics from sources like *Huffington Post*, *CNN* and *The Guardian*

#### *Faculty of Engineering*

Overall, participants were very positive about SFL's work and attempt to improve the education. The difficulty of learning a language in one year at DBE in an EFL context, the changing student profile, low student motivation, logistical problems at university level (credit problem, student population) were recurring themes as the major challenges for SFL to help students to reach the desired level. However, they stated that it would be very helpful if SFL could take action to:

increase students' self-confidence

develop reading habits

teach how to write a report

focus on topics that are likely to be appealing and relevant to students (earthquake, crash test, biographies of scientists, current issues taken from Times, Newsweek etc.)

focus on academic skills like planning, outlining and reviewing their work before submitting it, giving citations, conventions of formal writing.

One of the participants said "you can teach students how to make generalizations... For example, not to tell the computer program but the idea behind it... to present the idea with its main points" If you really try to do something, you can teach students how to make generalizations in order to talk about or to outline an idea instead of a computer program.

Some of the professors gave specific examples of activities they found useful. One of them said "it may be a good idea to focus more on writing. When I was taking English courses in US, we wrote a lot. Students can be given different topics and be asked to write". Two others pointed out the importance of organizing conversation clubs where native and non-native speakers participate.

Other comments concerned the courses offered by MLD. One teacher suggested offering a social English course. Another suggested changing the course status of ENG 311 as a non-technical elective course. One of the interviewees stated that students who pass the proficiency exam with low grades are very likely to need a different kind of support. One of the participants from the Department of Mechanical Engineering dwelled on the orientation program prep students get at the department. He said that in the second week of April students attend lectures in the department and added that the orientation program can be restructured to be more effective.

## **General Comments about the Faculty and University**

The interviewers also made more general comments that need to be discussed as part of the overall university policy.

### *Faculty of Architecture*

The participants from the Faculty of Architecture did not make any specific comments about the university.

### *Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

#### *Social Sciences*

The professor from the Department of Sociology stated that the increase in the number of students admitted to the department by the Council of Higher Education is a problem for the university. S/he added that when the student number rose to 85, they had to give up some curricular educational activities.

#### *Natural Sciences*

The professor from the Department of Mathematics pointed out the impact of the decrease in the university admission grade on the nature of the student profile in the department. Students do not have effective study skills and they do not follow the lessons. S/he believes that students need to try hard to understand mathematics and study with discipline. S/he pointed out that it may be beneficial if students are given a placement test in mathematics and weaker students can be required to take a “pre-calculus” course. S/he also pointed out the motivation problem in the academic staff and added that some teachers focus more on publishing than teaching. S/he is also critical of the impact of the student evaluations on teacher’s performance indicating that this leads some of the professors to do what will please students. S/he said, “So far, ODTU has been a highly reputable university not for its research but for the success of its graduates”. The professor from the Department of Biology also commented on the promotion and tenure criteria and said “in order to get promotion or tenure, academic staff need to publish AA articles. Grading 60 student essays is not a promotion and tenure criterion”.

PHYS 1 indicated that the idea that METU is an English medium university does not exist anymore and the English problem needs to be solved at the administrative level in the University. S/he stated that it is important to reinforce the idea that METU is an English-

medium university. S/he asked, “why does the university not have an introduction video in English? Why don’t the student clubs introduce themselves in English? Why are there not any English programs on Radyo ODTU?” The professor suggested increasing the number of elective courses that will appeal to students and giving a standard English education in such courses. The professor from the Department of Chemistry also stated that student clubs and activities should be a part of their English education. The limited number of exchange programs was brought up by one of the other participants.

Some of the participants commented about the teaching staff. Two of them were concerned about the English proficiency level of the research assistants. The professor from the Department of Statistics said that 7-8 of the 13 assistants are ÖYP (Öğretim Üyesi Yetiştirme Programı/ Faculty Development Program) assistants and their English proficiency is not be sufficient. They teach at least two hours a week and their language problems have an impact on the quality of education undergraduate students take. S/he explained that as a department they tried out some strategies like team teaching to remedy the situation but the solutions led to other problems. S/he commented that language proficiency should be considered carefully when recruiting research assistants. S/he explained that although s/he had a passing TOEFL score, before she was given a class to teach in US, she was required to give a demo lesson. S/he asked if it is possible to provide speaking courses for these assistants. PHYS 1 is also critical of the language proficiency of some teachers and especially focuses on the language problems of the assistants. S/he said “The assistants can learn how to pronounce words from the Internet before the lessons. Students learn what they hear from the teachers.” S/he believes that a teacher who respects his/her profession sets a good model for students.

Both of the participants from the Department of Physics and the professor from the Department of Biology mentioned the importance of pedagogical knowledge for teachers. PHYS 2 indicated that teachers do not have pedagogical training and learn teaching following an apprenticeship model. They teach the way they were taught. S/he believes that education is a science on its own and teacher’s lack of training in teaching is a problem. S/he referred to a problem they faced in the PhD qualifying exam. S/he explained that there was a student who got AA from 10 different mathematics courses during his/her PhD; however, the student got 0 in the qualifying exam. S/he thinks that this is partly because of teachers’ lack of education in assessment.

One of the participants suggested investigating ways to arrange language school exchange programs for students. Another participant commented on the impact of the publication criteria on teachers' performance and elaborated on the "research vs. teaching university" concern:

Teachers are worried about getting published in A-type journals. METU so far has been a fine teaching university. Its attempt to give a phoney appearance of being a research institution is unfortunate. It used to be a good teaching university. We are losing it.

The research grants for faculty should be increased. Regarding faculty, sabbaticals need to be more readily given. If METU is really planning to become a research university as opposed to only giving the appearance of one, money needs to be spent on the library--for upgrading the staff plus subscribing to the hard-copy versions of all those journals we rely on in electronic form--a bad way to do things as browsing through them and comparative reading becomes difficult or impossible--as well as hiring a set of research librarians about 8 per faculty to cover the latest books and articles that are coming out in the fields and be able to advise faculty on acquisitions of these. Library should also run 24/7 365 days a year.

S/he also commented that large classes and cheating are problems that need to be addressed by the university.

### *Faculty of Education*

One of the participants (EDU 3) stated that there is a need to take precautions to deal with plagiarism. Professors are not knowledgeable enough about plagiarism. S/he said "I give zero... Indeed, the student needs to get a discipline punishment". Another participant (EDU 1) stated that the idea that METU is an international university should be further stressed. S/he said "the activities in the university are mostly in Turkish. They should be in English as well". She also suggested organizing social activities which bring Turkish and international students together. Students should use language as a social tool.

Another professor indicated that university administration should take action against teachers who do not follow the language policy of the university. S/he believes that unless the university finds a way to prevent teachers from using Turkish in their courses, the English problem cannot be solved. S/he added that this solution is beyond MLD. S/he was also critical of the promotion and tenure criteria and said that the university puts emphasis on publications and projects for professor's promotion and this has a detrimental effect on education. For example, professors who do not teach in English should not be promoted and/or tenured. According to the professor, in the teacher evaluation form, if it is stated that the teacher uses Turkish and it is important to take action about this.

### *Faculty of Engineering*

The majority of the professors who participated in the study shared their concerns about the changing student profile. Discipline problems such as playing with mobile phones, cheating in homework and exams, and plagiarism were reported. Further investigation into these revealed that there is not a systematic approach to deal with these problems. As discussed above, some professors stated that the low motivation problem is not limited to English courses, and there is a decrease in student motivation compared to the previous years. With a few exceptions, participants stated that students are less competent and hardworking compared to the students in their generation. One professor stated that in classes, they discuss current news and combined theory and practice. S/he said that some students' ignorance of current news is a problem.

One of the professors said that some of the students are not good language learners and English is an obstacle to their success. S/he suggested that it would be to the benefit of such students to be guided to study at universities where medium of instruction is Turkish. S/he added that letting the students start their departments with weak English is a wrong policy. Although none of the participants advocated education in the mother tongue, some said that the fact that lessons are English creates an additional burden for students. One of the professors said "when studying for associate professorship qualifying exam, I needed to study from Turkish sources. Certain things seemed clearer even to me. Our students study Thermodynamics from English sources. I sometimes question to what extent they understand what they read".

Some of the participants stated the importance of the "international" status of the university and highlighted the need to work on how to maintain and/or reinforce the internationality of the university. Further support for projects like Erasmus, scholarships for international students were some of the suggestions to attract more foreign students. It was also stated that Turkish students were shy to communicate with international students and some of the professors observed that these international students ended up being left out. One of the participants also said that the administrative personnel have limited English and this is also a problem for international students. Inviting or hiring more international professors was another suggestion to reinforce the idea that METU is an international university. There were some concerns about the faculty's level of English as well. One professor even suggested

speaking support for the teachers. S/he also added that a mentoring system in which new teachers are monitored and supported can be an effective tool for professional development.

On the other hand, the teachers think that students who go abroad with Erasmus benefit from the experience and ask if it possible to increase opportunities for attending such exchange programs. Another suggestion was to cooperate with organizations like American Culture Association and British Council and design partnership projects to create opportunities for students to engage in language and culture projects. One of the professors expressed his/her approval of the university's decision to support PhD students to attend international conferences and said that this is a good attempt to help them improve their language skills.

Some of the participants stated that if the faculty members further stress the importance of English for students, this may have a positive effect on them. One of them said that in career seminars, graduates or important people in the sector may be asked to talk about the role of English in their career.

### **Discussion of the significant findings**

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

1. The importance of English for students' success in the departments varies depending on the nature of the course. In some courses, basic English skills accompanied by satisfactory mathematical skills help students meet the course requirements at least to some extent. Therefore, it can be concluded that in certain cases, students may not feel the need to further improve their English to succeed in their departments. Similarly, although in some departments English is perceived to be very important for a career in the field, in others, depending on the career choices students will make, English might be less important. However, at this point, it is important to add the point stated by some of the faculty members, that in the sector, METU graduates are expected to have a good command of English.

As some of the participants stated, the faculty teachers' role in helping students to perceive the importance of English should be considered. Again as the participants reported, there may also be teachers who have their reservations about English-medium instruction and this is likely to have a negative impact on students.

2. The interviews revealed that Turkish use is very common in the departments. There are very few teachers who have adopted an English only policy. Although it seems that the majority teach in English and speak in English, they switch to Turkish when they feel that students cannot follow them. Most of the time, there are educational concerns behind teachers' decisions to tolerate Turkish use in the lessons. In addition, most of the teachers allow students to use Turkish. They state that if they use a no-Turkish policy, students stop participating altogether.

However, this implementation may have a negative backwash effect in the long run. The more teachers tolerate Turkish, the less students use English and this is very likely to be a vicious circle. As some of the participants indicated, in some departments students already think that Turkish is acceptable to varying degrees. They seemed to have developed a silent resistance to speak in English in their lessons. It is interesting to learn that some teachers translate students' Turkish utterances into English for other students. Teachers also speculated on the reasons why students do not use English. It was interesting that confidence, peer pressure, artificiality and convenience issues rather than low English proficiency were emphasized as the major reasons behind students' reservations about English use. Participation in the lesson - be it English or Turkish- may be an issue to consider on its own. How many more students would participate if they can speak in Turkish? In fact, involving all students in class is one of the cornerstones of effective teaching.

Some of the professors are already using strategies to encourage students to participate in English and to help them follow the lessons in English. The effectiveness of these strategies can be shared in staff meetings and the repertoire can be expanded.

3. It should be noted that the professors' reports on students' weaknesses and strengths are limited to what they can observe within a course and are highly subjective. As they themselves indicate most of the time they accept language that they can understand. Their criteria for satisfactory language may also vary. However, obviously, with one exception, all participants agree that students' productive skills are in need of improvement. Even at the graduate level, language proficiency and deficiency in academic skills challenge the faculty members.

4. Academic writing as an important weakness is a recurrent theme. Collecting samples of academic writing and rubrics, and comparing it with what students are expected to write in

MLD courses might provide insights into why students still have problems with the basics of academic writing.

5. Report writing is the most common writing at the Faculty of Engineering. It should be further investigated if report writing can be covered in the MLD courses.

6. It can be discussed if SFL-AWC can be structured to provide service for students who are engaged in academic writing in their junior and/or senior years.

7. The professors reported that graduate level students are also challenged in academic writing. AWC is already providing service for these students; however, further research can be done into how AWC can further be utilized to help remedy this problem. The possibility of adding an obligatory Academic Writing and Research Skills course for graduate students can be discussed. Finally, the reliability of the proficiency exams or the cut-score for admission can be further investigated.

8. Speaking has emerged as another important weakness. As the participants requested, SFL and METU administration should take action to provide further opportunities to help students build confidence in their speaking skills and practice more. Especially professors teaching technical courses emphasize the importance of “daily English” for students.

9. Students’ tendency to write long sentences may be related to the education they received previously. Instead, they may be encouraged to use rich vocabulary. As participants indicated there is a need to expand students’ vocabulary. They should not only focus on guessing words but also on using monolingual dictionaries and actually learning new words.

Some of the professors stated that students are being under challenged in DBE. This may be the case especially for relatively stronger students and this issue should be further investigated.

10. An effective way to teach critical reading skills and citation techniques is reaction-response writing. The inclusion of this type of writing should be considered.

11. In the courses where students are expected to use more English, the problem gets worse. Also, in the courses in which students are expected to engage in critical and creative thinking,

English deficiency is more of a problem. According to some of the participants, this is in part related to the fact that they have not developed these skills in their native language. Is it possible to focus on some of these skills in the compulsory Turkish courses (TURK 103 and 104)?

12. The professors acknowledge the link between assessment and learning. They believe that if students can be provided with opportunities to write and speak more, and to get more feedback, they can improve these skills. Indeed, teachers who have experience with SUNY and Erasmus students have observed this happening. However, the class size is an important obstacle to such an assessment policy.

13. The faculty members prioritize mastery of technical knowledge when grading student work, and due to time constraints and the abundance of mistakes, they cannot provide effective feedback on language problems. It is also important to note that the English use teachers consider to be acceptable in the local context may not be clear or accurate in real life contexts.

14. At the Faculty of Engineering, some of the faculty reported that they use rubrics to grade student work like presentation, report and project, and the assessment criteria go beyond technical knowledge to include aspects like team work, organization and presentation skills. However, it is not possible to conclude if this is a common practice in the Faculty of Engineering. If it is not, the departments can focus on this issue to highlight important skills to assess in students' written and oral production.

15. The backwash of the assessment practices should be carefully considered by the professors. Multiple choice and short answer may be very well suited to test certain course outcomes; however, they are of little use in helping students improve their productive skills. Also, it is very difficult to test higher-order skills through such test types. If teachers give up on using short-essay questions because they cannot understand students' English, how will students learn to express themselves? What does SFL do about multiple choice and short-answer questions? Does SFL try to break their habits in the way we test our students?

16. Exam procedures seem to vary even within the same departments. Some of the professors answer the questions students ask during the exam, some do not. Some of them let

students use dictionaries, others do not since they have observed that students cheat. Some of the teachers accept if students write a couple of Turkish words. In one class, students are not penalized for Turkish use in the project presentations, in another they are not allowed to do so.

All these differences may negatively affect the reliability of the exams. Students should not be asking questions in the exams for a number of pedagogical reasons. Depending on the reason behind the questions, precautions should be taken to prevent this from happening. Also, it is important to be consistent with the policy if students answer the questions in Turkish. It should be noted that although most teachers can understand when a Turkish student writes the answer in his/her native tongue, most international students do not have the freedom to use their native tongue.

17. The academic skills covered in the MLD courses are indeed coherent with the needs the faculty members talked about. However, it is very likely that freshman or sophomore year students do not see that these skills are relevant to their departmental courses. Indeed, the findings of the ENG 101 questionnaire confirm this hypothesis (ENG).

Students seem to need more information about what awaits them in their departments and how MLD courses cater for these needs.

18. It was also seen that faculty members know very little about the academic skills taught at MLD. For example, academic misconduct is a highly emphasized topic in the MLD courses. Students are taught citation techniques and how to avoid plagiarism in ENG 101, ENG 102 and ENG 211. In fact, there are serious sanctions for such academic misconduct. The faculty teachers do not seem to know what kind of academic skills and topics MLD teaches to students.

The students should be expected to use these skills effectively in their departments.

19. The research that has been done so far as part of the SFL program evaluation reveals that especially prep, freshman and sophomore year students know little about the kind of academic tasks they will need to do in their departments, and they also cannot see a close link between the skills taught in the English courses and their departments. The orientation programs can be revised to remedy this problem. Also, the texts used in the courses can be varied to include more texts that will appeal to students who prefer to read texts about their field of study.

20. There are different views about ESP; however, a majority of the participants are either against the idea or favour certain conditions being met. The participants from the Faculty of Architecture are positive about ESP and indicate that working on texts related to their department may be useful and motivating for students. It is also stated that in the Introduction to Architecture course, they use reading packs. Another suggestion was team teaching of ESP courses by faculty and MLD teachers. Terminology instruction in such a course is an issue that needs to be discussed with the Faculty administration and faculty members.

The majority of the interviewees from the Faculty of Engineering think that ESP is not necessary. They are of the opinion that the courses improving students general English and academic skills will help them to perform better in their departments. They also believe that MLD courses can be further polished to cater to the needs of the engineering students without adopting a strict ESP approach.

Overall it does not seem feasible and necessary to switch to an ESP approach in the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. For one thing, the present MLD courses are already quite coherent with the academic skills the Faculty wants to foster, such as essay writing, reflective writing, using citations, debating and critical thinking. Unfortunately, the faculty members know little about the scope and content of these courses though. Second, students' general lack of motivation and their poor language skills are both a part of the problem and ESP may not be the best solution to deal with these problems. However, there is an urgent need to revise texts to cater to the needs and interests of students under the feedback provided by the faculty members.

The social sciences division of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences believe that technical expertise is important to teach ESP courses. On the other hand, there are conflicting views in the natural sciences division, and the pro and con arguments are similar to the ones noted in the Faculty of Engineering. A similar division can also be seen in the Faculty of Education.

In light of the information collected, adopting an ESP approach does not seem to be the most effective and efficient way to help students to improve their academic English skills. However, certain modifications can be made to the courses to appeal to the needs and interests of a wider population. One of the common suggestions made by the participants was to increase the variation in the texts used in the courses. The course materials and tasks should be reviewed and upgraded to do this. It should be noted that there are many different forms of writing tasks even across the faculty. Therefore, a more sustainable approach might

be to learn how to outline the organizational structure of a genre rather than teaching many different types and unity & coherence.

Both in the Department of Basic English (DBE) and in MLD the general vs. academic English balance should be reconsidered. Some of the participants suggested that DBE also should move away from general English to academic English. Students should see that they are no longer dealing with high school English. This may not be possible for low levels but as soon as they get more competent EAP can be taught.

In addition, the role of the departmental introduction courses can be reconsidered at the faculty/ university level.

21. It does not seem possible that students can be asked to take more compulsory English courses. ENG 311 Advanced Communication Skills course has already been taken out of the program in most departments. However, as one of the professors said this course may be introduced as a non-technical elective course. Also, MLD may consider offering a variety of elective courses which will cater to the varied needs and interests of students. There is a huge gap among students both in terms of their language and academic skills. If such courses are to be designed, one crucial point to be taken into account should be to avoid designing courses which will only appeal to students who are already competent users of English. Students are not likely to be interested in courses in which they are likely to get low grades no matter how hard they study, and workload also puts off students. Also, there should be incentives for SFL instructors who will design and teach these courses since due to staff number limitations, they will need to design and teach these courses on top of their regular workload.

22. There is a need to develop a systematic approach to deal with academic misconduct. Presently, it seems the sanctions for committing various types of academic misconduct are at the discretion of individual teachers.

23. METU can explore strategies to reinforce its status as an international university. In the interviews, the participants have already made some suggestions regarding how to achieve this. However, this can be further discussed with a broader audience.

24. The international students are a major force in supporting instruction in English. Their absence increases the likelihood that Turkish becomes an alternative. However, some

participants have concerns about their integration with the Turkish students. This issue can be further explored by the relevant parties.

25. METU can explore strategies to provide METU students with further opportunities to engage in international activities and programs in Turkey and abroad.

26. Quite a number of participants raised their concerns about the publication criteria on teachers' teaching performance. This is an issue that should be considered by University Administration.

Table 2 summarizes the problems raised by the faculty members and suggests possible action and parties to be involved for further action.

Table 2: Problems, Possible Actions and Parties to be involved in Action

<b>Problems</b>	<b>Possible Action</b>	<b>Party to be involved</b>
<b>Importance of English</b> - Helping students appreciate the importance of English for them to succeed in their departments and future career.	- Updating the faculty orientation program at DBE. - Investigating the Career Development activities - Reinforcing the international university image	SFL  University Administration  Faculty
<b>Turkish Use in the Lessons</b> - Finding ways to help students follow the lessons in English.	- Developing a language policy and teaching strategies to maximize English use.	Faculty

<p><b>Language Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helping students improve especially their productive language skills</li> <li>- Helping students to become more confident in speaking</li> <li>- Helping students use daily/ social English</li> <li>- Helping students expand their vocabulary knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewing SFL curriculum</li> <li>- Analyzing students' written or spoken production</li> <li>- Investigating the EPE cut scores for undergraduate programs</li> <li>- Offering a wide range of courses students can take as non-technical electives</li> <li>- Investigating why ENG 311 is not a popular elective course</li> <li>- exploring strategies to provide METU students with further opportunities to engage in international activities and programs in Turkey and abroad.</li> </ul>	<p>SFL R &amp; D</p> <p>University Administration</p>
<p><b>Report Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helping students write reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewing SFL curriculum</li> <li>- Analyzing report samples from different departments</li> </ul>	<p>SFL R &amp; D</p>
<p><b>Academic Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helping senior and junior students with their academic writing skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investigating the possibility of their using the SFL-AWC</li> </ul>	<p>SFL SFL-AWC</p>
<p><b>Academic Writing Skills of Graduate Students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helping graduate level students with their academic writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further introduction of AWC</li> <li>- Investigating the possibility of offering research skills course in the relevant departments</li> <li>- Investigating the EPE cut scores for graduate studies</li> </ul>	<p>University Administration</p> <p>Faculty</p>
<p><b>DBE Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouraging students to study harder to improve their English in DBE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewing SFL curriculum</li> </ul>	<p>SFL R &amp; D</p>
<p><b>Critical Thinking Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helping students develop critical thinking skills (a skill that they may not have in their native tongue)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewing SFL curriculum</li> <li>- Contacting Turkish Department (for TURK 103-TURK 104 must courses)</li> </ul>	<p>University Administration</p> <p>Department of Turkish Language</p> <p>SFL</p>

<b>Assessment</b> - Using learning-oriented assessment practices - Ensuring standard procedures in exam administration	- Reviewing assessment practices used across the university and investigating the feasibility of making more room for assessment for learning. - Reviewing exam administration procedures	University Administration  Faculty  SFL
<b>Communication with Faculties</b> - Improving the communication between MLD and other departments - Addressing specific needs of different departments	- Informing the departments about the content of the courses - Investigating if closer partnership can further serve the needs of relevant parties	University Administration  Faculty  SFL/ MLD R & D
<b>Academic Misconduct</b> - developing a systematic approach to deal with academic misconduct	- Developing a standard academic misconduct policy across the university	University Administration  Faculty  Ethics Committee SFL
<b>International Students</b> - investigating their needs	- conducting a research study	University Administration  International Students Office
<b>Promotion criteria at the university</b> - investigating its impact on education at the university	- conducting a research study	University Administration  Faculty

### Concluding Remarks

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

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## Appendix A: Questions for the Formal Interview with the Faculty

Kaç senedir ODTÜ’de çalışıyorsunuz?

Kaçıncı sınıfların derslerine giriyorsunuz?

1. Sizce öğrencilerinizin iyi derece İngilizce bilmeleri bölümde başarılı olmaları için ne kadar önemli? Sizce öğrencilerinizin iyi derece İngilizce bilmeleri kariyerlerinde başarılı olmaları için ne kadar önemli?

Sizce bölümlerde İngilizce’nin önemi vurgulanıyor mu?

2. Bölümde ilk senelerinde öğrencilerden ne gibi çalışmaları (academic Research Paper, lab report, reflective essay, argumentative essay, report writing ) hangi sıklıkta yapmalarını bekliyorsunuz? İlerki yıllarda bu çalışmalar ne derece farklılık gösteriyor?

\* Ağırlıklı olarak ne gibi ölçme değerlendirme yöntemleri kullanılıyor? (Multiple-choice, Problem-solving)

3. Bölüm derslerindeki beklentileri karşılamak için öğrencilerin İngilizcesini ne derece yeterli buluyorsunuz?

a. Öğrencilerinizin İngilizce kullanırken güçlü yönleri neler?

b. öğrencilerinizin İngilizce kullanırken nelerde zorlanıyor?

4. Öğrencileriniz dersleri İngilizce takip etmekte zorlandıkları zamanlarda neler yapıyorsunuz? (Örneğin kelimeleri “gloss” vermek)

5. Öğrencilerinizin derse İngilizce katılımını artırtmak için neler yapıyorsunuz?

6. Öğrencilerinizin yazılı ödevlerdeki İngilizce hatalarına yaklaşımınız nedir?

7. Bölümlere/ alanlara yönelik İngilizce eğitimi (ESP) verilmesi ile ilgili görüşleriniz nelerdir?

8. Sizce Hazırlık ve Modern Diller Bölümleri, İngilizce eğitimine ek olarak hangi akademik becerilerin kazandırılması üzerine çalışabilir?

9. Öğrencilerinizle ODTÜ’deki İngilizce öğretimi hakkında sohbet etme fırsatınız oluyor mu? Onlardan ne gibi görüşler, bilgiler alıyorsunuz?

10. Eğer sizin bölüm toplantılarından birine Hazırlık veya Modern Diller Bölümlerinden birer temsilci katılsa onlara ne söylemek isterdiniz?

