A NEEDS ANALYSIS STUDY FOR THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM OF THE TEACHING STAFF TRAINING PROGRAM IN A TURKISH UNIVERSITY

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Abstract
As the English language has become the universal academic language needed by academicians to be able to survive in the global academic community, teaching English to new academicians who start their university career as research assistants is becoming more and more important. Thus, the aim of this study is to reveal their language needs by focusing on the elements of the ideal English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum from the perspective of research assistants enrolled at the Teaching Staff Training Program (TSTP) at a large state university in Turkey and the instructors teaching English to these research assistants. Their views were collected via an open-ended survey dealing with four major dimensions of the EFL curriculum of the TSTP: curricular objectives, materials, teaching-learning process and assessment. Besides, their general recommendations for the language curriculum were collected. The qualitative data analyzed though content analysis revealed many needs, the most important of which is that the English curriculum for TSTP should be more academic and exam-oriented. At the end of the study, recommendations are provided in line with the participants' opinions and the relevant literature.

Key Words: Teaching Staff Training Program, English Curriculum

Background to the Study
It is an undeniable fact that English is the most commonly spoken language in the whole world. As rightly described by Mauranen (2003, p. 513), English has become "a vehicular language spoken by people who do not share a native

language". Despite being welcomed by some and criticized by others, it is commonly acknowledged that English functions as a global lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2005). Its dominant role in our social life was illustrated by Gnutzman (2000) who claims that 80% of all the verbal exchanges even between non-native speakers of English are in English. As also predicted by Graddol (2000), the number of people speaking English is around three billion. The dominance of the English language is similarly true for the scientific, technological and academic world. It is estimated by Crystal (1997, p.106) that "most of the scientific, technological and academic information in the world is expressed in English and over 80% of all the information stored in electronic retrieval systems is in English".

Academia is probably the domain most highly affected by the spread of the English language. The academic community has embraced English with the internationalization movement of the higher education through the Bologna Process. As English is now the major language used for the dissemination of academic knowledge, it has almost become a professional must for many academicians to speak, understand, read and write in English (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). As maintained by Schütz (2005), 85 percent of all scientific publications are conducted in English, and especially in the fields of natural and social sciences, the dominance of English is more noticeable (Swales & Feak, 2004). To illustrate, Ammon (2003) focused on the Anglo-Saxon bibliographic databases and found that by 1995, 87.2% of the journal publications in the natural sciences (e.g., biology) and 82.5% of the publications in the social sciences (e.g., sociology) were in English. Likewise, Hyland (2006) emphasizes that the most prestigious and cited journals are in English and more than 90 per cent of the journal literature in many scientific fields is in English. Thus, academicians should have a good command of English to be able to survive in the academic world.

As for the Turkish academic community where academicians are expected to publish in Social Citation Index journals, most of which only accept English articles, it would be fair to suggest that it is essential for academicians in Turkey to learn English. As nicely stated by Karakaş (2012), Turkish academicians cannot be indifferent to the current role of English as a lingua franca for the academic world as it plays a significant role in their future career as a tool to pave the way for academic promotion. Furthermore, he draws attention to the importance of English for Turkish academicians as follows: "Even if when they write in Turkish for a national journal or science magazine, it is by and large compulsory for them, at least, to provide an abstract written in formal and Standard English. Worse than this, many academics end up their

career without taking the fruit of their long-term investment and effort in their vocation owing to either failure to pass English exams or having no publications written in the English language" (p. 166).

As also claimed by Güven and Brewster (2013), Turkish academicians are among people encountering major problems in the process of learning English. Therefore, the Higher Education Council (HEC) in Turkey initiated the Teaching Staff Training Program (TSTP) in 2010 to regulate the procedures related to educating the young research assistants to be appointed to different departments of newly established universities. The program requires research assistants to have their post graduate education at some other Turkish universities qualified to offer MA and PhD programs.

Within the scope of this program, these academicians, who have to get a passing grade in some nationally or international accepted English language proficiency exams (e.g., YDS, IELTS) to be able to progress in their academic career, are offered an English curriculum for up to six-months (HEC, 2012; Güven & Brewster, 2013). As argued by Güven and Brewster (2013), focusing on the TSTPs by collecting data from different participants at different universities is likely to contribute to the important developments in foreign language teaching in Turkey.

Considering the importance of the English language for the Turkish academia and the lack of research studies on the EFL curriculum of the TSTPs in Turkey (Güven & Brewster, 2013; Gündeğer, Soysal, & Yağcı, 2012), there is a need to reveal what research assistants and their English language instructors at a large Turkish university suggest for an ideal EFL curriculum for the TSTP in terms of curriculum objectives, materials, teaching-learning process as well as the assessment procedures applied in the curriculum. Hence, the following research questions were formulated for the present study:

1. What are research assistants' needs about the curricular objectives, teaching-learning process, materials and the assessment dimensions of the language curriculum?
2. What are English language instructors' suggestions about the curricular objectives, teaching-learning process, materials and the assessment dimensions of the language curriculum?
3. What are English language instructors and research assistants' general recommendations about the ideal EFL program of the TSTP?

The EFL Curricula of the TSTP in Turkey

The TSTP basically aims to bridge the gap in Turkey in the field of training young research assistants for newly established universities in Turkey. The general rationale of this program is to prepare these academicians in higher education institutions which have the capacity to give post-graduate education so that they can become scientifically well-prepared to serve better when they go back to their newly established universities. One of the major components of this program is offering EFL courses to the research assistants to make them proficient users of the English language. In line with the Higher Education Law enacted in 2011, the HEC in Turkey requires all academicians to get passing scores from the English proficiency exams such as YDS, IELTS, TOEFL, CAE, FCE and CPE that are all approved by the Turkish Assessment, Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM). While YDS is a multiple-choice grammar, vocabulary and reading-based test only approved by Turkish universities, other internationally approved exams assess learners' proficiency in four basic language skills (i.e., listening, reading, writing, speaking) as well as their use of English in the form of both multiple choice and other type of exams (i.e., filling in blanks, rewriting).

The English program within the TSTPs in Turkey generally lasts around six months, and an approximate number of 25-30 hours are provided per week. The course books and the materials to be used during the program are selected by the School of Foreign Languages of the university. Likewise, course objectives, the teaching-learning activities and the assessment procedures are all determined by the same body in line with the general principles of the TSTP as suggested by the HEC (2012). In other words, although the general requirements of the EFL program implemented in the TSTPs in Turkey were outlined by the HEC, the job of making a decision on the elements of the English language teaching curriculum offered to research assistants is left to the universities where the TSTP is carried out. Generally, a selected body of curriculum designers or English teachers develops the EFL curriculum for the TSTP. Thus, there is a need for studies to understand what research assistants' needs are and what English language instructors suggest for the English curriculum to better prepare research assistants for the academia.

Thus, the present needs analysis study aims to analyze the perceived needs of the academicians and the suggestions of English language instructors in terms of the objectives, materials, teaching-learning process and the assessment dimensions of the English curriculum applied in the TSTP in a large state university in Turkey. It is hoped that the findings of the study will shed lights

on other similar programs at other universities offering English courses for academicians.

Literature Review

There have been only a few studies dealing with the English curriculum applied within the TSTPs in Turkey. For example, in an attempt to reveal how performance and competence have interacted during the English training of the TSTP in a state university, Güven and Brewster (2013) collected data from twenty-nine research assistants coming from different academic fields and from different regions of Turkey, four English teachers teaching these research assistants and one administrator. Collecting data through an open-ended survey, they came to the conclusion that participants felt themselves in dilemma between competence and performance. According to the researchers, the reason behind this dilemma is that although they are aware of the communicative function of the language and the necessity to be able to use English for speaking and writing purposes, they know that they have to pass certain English proficiency exams, some of which do not assess these productive skills (e.g., YDS). Therefore, confusion occurs about why and how to learn English in the TSTP.

Another study was carried out by Gündeğer, Soysal and Yağcı (2012). The purpose of their study is to reveal the views of research assistants attending EFL programs in Turkey and abroad about the domestic and outland language training conducted within the TSTP. The qualitative data was collected from 10 research assistants who attended domestic language training and 11 research assistants, who had outland language training. The findings of the study showed that the research assistants attending English courses in a Turkish university indicated that because of exam-driven anxiety, their expectations to learn academic English were not met. Similarly, research assistants, who had outland language training, pointed out that their expectations like improving their speaking ability were not met due to the lack of teacher quality and the high number of Turkish students in the same classroom.

Methodology and Participants

In this needs analysis study, the researchers aimed to offer suggestions for the English curriculum of the TSTP in light of the opinions and perceptions of research assistants and English language instructors. The study is conducted based on the phenomenological research design of qualitative approach (Patton, 2002; Yıldırım & Şimsek, 2009).

All the research assistants attending the TSTP (N=43) and all the English instructors (N=14) lecturing in the program participated in the study. The

qualitative data were collected through an open-ended survey including 5 open-ended questions developed by the researchers in parallel with the elements of a language curriculum (Brown, 1995). Each question deals with a specific element of the program. For example, the first question aims to reveal what should be objectives of the TSTP while the second question seeks an answer to the question what materials should be used in the program. The third question deals with participants' perceived needs during an ideal teaching-learning process and the forth question aims to show their opinions about how the assessment should be carried out in the program. The last question, on the other hand, is a general question focusing on what participants' general recommendations are for the ideal EFL program of the TSTP.

Data Collection and Analysis

Before the surveys were conducted, the research assistants and English language instructors were informed regarding the aims and dimensions of the study. The participants were informed that none of their opinions would be used for any other purposes but for the study.

Since analyzing qualitative data by using content analysis helps to reveal the truth which may be hidden in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Straus & Corbin, 1998; Krippendorff, 2004; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2009), all the participants' responses taking part in the study were applied to content analysis. All individual responses were analyzed and similar responses were grouped according to common themes. These themes were illustrated by means of representative comments made by the participants and the frequency (f) of each theme was indicated on the tables below.

Results

Participants' views about each element of the English curriculum applied within the TSTP are presented separately below under the heading of curricular objectives, the teaching-learning process, materials and assessment. Representative comments made by the participants are referred to with a number (e.g., Research Assistant 1: RA 1; English Instructor 1: EI 1) to maintain anonymity. Following the results of the study dealing with specific aspects of the program, participants' general recommendations for an ideal EFL curriculum of the TSTP are summarized.

Curricular Objectives

The themes created according to the views of research assistants regarding the objectives of the TSTP are given in Table 1 while the relevant views of the English language instructors are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 1. Research Assistants' Views on Objectives		**f**
Academic English	… objectives of the program may include academic English in order to support our professional lives…" (RA 1)	23
Exam-oriented	… the program presented could be based on the preparations for the exams…" (RA 10)	17
Speaking	"… in order to develop our speaking skills in our professional life, it would be better to give credence to this skill in the program…" (RA 3)	15
Reading	"… as we have difficulty in understanding some reading texts, reading studies should be more emphasized …" (RA 17)	15
Translation	"… sometimes we need to translate some texts or articles, so it is important for us to learn how to do translation…" (RA 21)	8
Presentation	"… it is significant for our field to make presentations concerning our fields…" (RA 5)	5
Vocabulary Teaching	"…learning new vocabulary and studying word formation are principal parts of learning a language…" (RA 11)	3
Paper Writing	"…writing is one of the most difficult skills for us to develop. Hence, we should focus on how to write some papers in our sessions…" (RA 14)	3
Understanding Speaking	"… often we may have difficulty in catching spoken English from audio and visual materials, that's why we need to education on understanding the language…" (RA 4)	3

As can be seen in Table 1, more than half of the research assistants suggested that there should be objectives meeting their "academic English" needs. While 17 assistants thought that the objectives should be in line with the exams that must be passed to be promoted in the academic environment of Turkey, 15 research assistants indicated that the speaking skill should be focused on as an objective of the program. Similarly, reading was emphasized by 15 research assistants and 8 of them mentioned the need for translation as an objective of the EFL curriculum. 5 research assistants held the idea that presentations should be adopted as the objective of the program while the importance of

vocabulary teaching, academic paper writing and understanding speaking was emphasized as the ideal objectives of the curriculum by three participants.

Table 2. English Instructors' Views on Objectives		**f**
Academic Reading	"…the curriculum should provide more academic reading studies…" (EI 1)	10
Academic Writing	"…academic writing must be one of the skills needed all the time by academicians…" (EI 4)	8
Academic Speaking	"… the program carried out is actually lack of activities especially regarding academic speaking that will be beneficial for the learners here…" (EI 8)	6
Academic Presentation	"…one of the required components and aims of this course should include how to make academic presentations in order to prepare the learners for their careers…" (EI 9)	5
Understanding Academic Speaking	"… the learners can sometimes have problems with understanding some kinds of academic English, so this issue should not be disregarded in the curriculum…" (EI 5)	5
Grammar Teaching	"… for the learners here it is necessary to teach grammatical points in a very detailed manner in order for them to have a command of the language…" (EI 2)	5
Vocabulary Teaching	"…we need to make a revision about teaching vocabulary in the curriculum, because I assume that it is a must…" (EI 3)	5
Developing Self-Study Skills	"…some of the learners do not know how to study and improve their skills by themselves…" (EI 14)	5

As illustrated in Table 2, among 14 English language instructors teaching English in the TSTP, 10 highlighted the need to include academic reading into the objective list. Also, 8 instructors suggested that academic writing should be one of the objectives. While academic speaking was mentioned as the ideal

objective of the program by 6 instructors, the following objectives were mentioned by 5 instructors: academic presentation, understanding academic speaking, grammar teaching, vocabulary teaching, and developing self-study skills.

Teaching-learning Process

The themes constructed in line with the views of research assistants related to the learning and teaching process are in Table 3, and the instructors' views are summarized in Table 4.

Table 3. Research Assistants' Views on Teaching-Learning Process		**f**
Practices for Exams	"…what we need is studying basically for exams ahead of us…" (RA 22)	18
Academic Speaking	"… in the lessons, we should do activities mainly about developing our speaking skills, particularly academic ones as in the case of presenting a topic related to our field…" (RA 34)	18
Academic Reading Texts	"… we generally read many texts, but actually we should concentrate on studying academic ones as we will need them more…" (RA 41)	16
Academic Translation	"…in the course of teaching and learning we must usually translate some texts, which will be a kind of preparation for our professional life…" (RA 24)	10
Understanding Academic Speaking	"…we should listen to academic lectures or watch actual lessons in our fields…" (RA 35)	7
Vocabulary	"…we are not good at using proper words and sometimes, we misuse some words while speaking and writing, so we have to spend some time about this problem in the lessons…" (RA 39)	6
Academic Writing	"… in the future, we will be academicians in our own fields; therefore, we should be trained on how to write an article, an abstract or something like these…" (RA 40)	5

As can be realized from Table 3, 18 research assistants highlighted the need for "practices for exams" and "academic speaking" for the ideal teaching-learning process for the EFL curriculum of the TSTP. "Academic reading texts" was mentioned by 16 assistants, and 10 research assistants suggested "academic translation" as a necessary component of an ideal teaching learning process.

"Understanding academic speaking" (N=7), "vocabulary" (N=6) and "academic writing" (N=5) were also mentioned for an ideal teaching-learning process.

Table 4. English Instructors' Views on Teaching-Learning Process		**f**
Academic English	"… in our program, we should put more emphasis not on general English but on academic English in order to meet the real needs of learner groups…" (EI 5)	15
Practices for Exams	"… the curriculum followed here should actually have lots of practice exams, which will be very beneficial for all the learners to pass exams…" (EI 12)	12
Skill-Based	"…in this process, language skills must be integrated, that is, skill-based teaching should be highlighted…" (EI 6)	10

As can be realized from Table 4, 15 English instructors thought that teaching-learning process should be based on the "academic English" needs of the research assistants, and 12 instructors held the belief that during the program, there should be practices for exams. Besides, 10 instructors indicated that skill-based teaching should be applied into the program.

Materials

The themes generated in conformity with the views of research assistants concerning the materials are given in Table 5 while English instructors' views are presented in Table 6.

Table 5. Research Assistants' Views on Materials		**f**
Reading Texts	"…as for materials, we want to study on written texts taken from current magazines or newspapers…" (RA 18)	14
Audio & Visual	"…in our lessons, we desire to watch short movies or animations, and have some courses including presentations …" (RA 33)	6
Practices for Exams	"… the materials we have to heavily deal with could be composed of sample questions and mock exams concerning the exams…" (RA 42)	6

Translation Studies	"… in the classroom environment, what I want is to learn how to render some texts into my own language…"(RA 37)	5
Speaking	"… speaking is one of the most important problems for us. Actually, we may be given some speaking tasks and materials to improve it…" (RA 28)	4

As can be understood from Table 5, 14 research assistants thought that reading texts should be used as the main material. 6 research assistants argued that audio-visual materials should be incorporated into the lessons. The same number of participants suggested that materials preparing themselves for the English exams necessary for academic promotion in Turkey should be incorporated into the curriculum. Moreover, 5 research assistants focused on the need to apply materials aiming to help themselves with translation studies, and 4 of them drew attention to the need to use communicative materials boosting their speaking skills.

Table 6. English Instructors' Views on Materials		**f**
Extensive Reading Texts	"…the curriculum should put more emphasis specifically on extensive reading materials, as the learners sometimes have trouble understanding written texts in the classroom…" (EI 6)	9
Videos & Short Films	"…I think that the program we are following must cover some videos and movies to motivate the learners and support the development of language skills…" (EI 7)	9
Resource for Exams	"…the materials we are using in the classroom may not be directly relevant to the exams, so it would be a good approach to add more relevant materials for exams to the program…" (EI 11)	7

As illustrated in Table 6, among the participating English instructors, 9 recommended extensive reading texts while the same number of participants favored the use of videos and short films. Similar to some research assistants, 7 instructors highlighted the need to utilize resources for exam preparation.

Assessment

The themes formed consistent with the views of research assistants concerning the assessment procedures applied in the English curriculum of the TSTP are illustrated in Table 7, and instructors' views are presented in Table 8.

Table 7. Research Assistants' Views on Assessment		**f**
Skill-Based Tests	"…as a matter of fact, we would like to take more exams assessing skills…" (RA 30)	12
Mock Exams	"… we need to take practice tests or exams more frequently…" (RA 26)	11
Speaking Tests	"….as I have never taken an official speaking exam before, I do not know how to overcome the process, so the tests we generally take should be replaced with speaking tests…" (RA 38)	8
Presentation Performances	"… it is really difficult to get accustomed to speaking and making presentations. It would be much better for us to prepare some presentation about our fields. Then our teachers could evaluate our presentations…" (RA 26)	7
Writing Exams	"… in the classroom, it may be beneficial for me to write some letters or paragraphs and be evaluated at once there…" (RA 13)	2

As can be realized from Table 7, 12 research assistants underlined the need to be given skills-based tests while 11 of them held the idea that the administration of mock-exams during the EFL program is necessary. 8 of them suggested the use of speaking tests for assessment purposes, and 7 stated that presentation performances should be taken as one of the criteria for the assessment of their English ability. Also, 2 research assistants mentioned the necessity of incorporating writing exams into the assessment procedures of the program.

Table 8. English Instructors' Views on Assessment		**f**
Formative Evaluation for Skills	"…the learners should be evaluated based on four skills, it should be much more significant whether they have acquired necessary skills or information…" (EI 13)	12
Summative Evaluation for Skills	"…in order to follow their progress and performance skill based evaluations should be carried out frequently in the course period…" (EI 7)	9

As shown in Table 8, formative evaluation (i.e., reflection journals, assignments) was deemed necessary by 12 English language instructors as a way to assess research assistants' proficiency in four basic skills while 9 of

them argued for the need for summative evaluation practices (i.e., final examinations, term papers).

General Suggestions

In addition to the participants' suggestions related to the four basic elements of the language curriculum, some participants also made general comments. For instance, 7 research assistants attracted attention to the necessity of extending the duration of the program. Holding regular meeting with assistants, reducing the homework load of research assistants, focusing on teaching four language skills were among other suggestions, each of which was made by 5 participating research assistants. On the other hand, 4 research assistants stressed the need to reorganize the English program hours. Likewise, the necessity to focus more on vocabulary teaching was brought about by 4 research assistants. The same number of participants suggested that the English instructors should give written feedback by reviewing the assignments given to them. In the same vein, 3 research assistants believed in the merits of the increased number of personal consultancy service hours, and 3 research assistants argued for a needs & expectations analysis that should be taken into consideration. Besides, 2 research assistants recommended that the intensity of the course content should be reduced to a reasonable level while 2 research assistants stated that the course book should be completed within the course duration. Finally, presenting the content of the course in simplicity was suggested by 2 research assistants.

On the other hand, some English language instructors came up with recommendations in line with research assistants' language needs. To illustrate, 7 instructors emphasized that the required adaptations should be made in the English curriculum considering research assistants' language proficiency. Besides, teaching tactics and strategies for exams that research assistants have to pass for academic promotion (N=5), extending the duration of the curriculum (N=5), focusing on teaching four language skills (N=5) were among other suggestions made by English language instructors. Additionally, the need for peer observation as a way to increase the quality of teaching in the program (N=3) and the necessity to increase the motivation level of research assistants (N=2) were mentioned by a few English instructors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The suggestions made both by research assistants and English language instructors about the curricular objectives, materials, teaching-learning process and the assessment elements of the program led the researchers to some

conclusions. For instance, the objectives of the language curriculum should focus more on academic English and include curricular objectives dealing with issues such as academic reading, writing, speaking and presentation. This finding corroborates with the findings of other studies done in other similar contexts in Turkey (Gündeğer et al., 2012; Güven & Brewster, 2013).

The academic English program suggested by the participants is important for academicians to be able to write papers in their own disciplines, and to be able to get involved in different tasks within the context of their disciplines, such as note-taking (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). As also underlined by Liyanage and Birch (2001), the English programs preparing English learners to carry out their studies in English in their chosen degree should include study skills such as summarizing, interpreting graphs, getting meaning from context and note-taking (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992) that are needed by research assistants attending the TSTP to pursue their academic career.

In addition, more classroom time should be given to exam preparation, especially for the English proficiency exams that have to be passed for academic promotion in Turkey so that research assistants can feel more motivated to attend English classes. As also emphasized in the reviewed literature, Turkish research assistants attending the TSTP feel exam-driven anxiety as they have to prove their English proficiency with an approved exam so as to climb up the steps of academic promotion (Karakaş, 2012). The requirement to achieve in language proficiency exams approved by the ÖSYM is known to be one of the factors influencing the Turkish academicians in many ways (Mirici, 2003). As also noted in the report "Turkey, Academic Career Structure" (2009) published by the European University Institute, the criteria to earn academic titles and degrees in Turkey were recently changed to require scientific publications in highly ranked academic journals, especially the ones indexed in SSCI and success in English proficiency tests.

Considering that many reading comprehension questions are included in English proficiency exams, participants believed that reading activities and materials should be used in the context of this study. As also found by Akpınar and Çakıldere (2013), academicians in Turkey are more interested in developing their reading skills because the English proficiency exam (i.e., YDS) administered by the ÖSYM mostly assesses their reading skills and their knowledge of grammar. In their study, they focused on the washback effect of the two old versions of the YDS (KPDS and ÜDS) and concluded that these exams have positive washback effect only on reading skills of the Turkish academicians; however, they had negative washback effect on writing, listening and speaking skills. To put it differently, they found that the

productive skills (i.e., speaking and writing) and receptive skill (i.e., listening) were ignored by the academicians taking part in their study. Thus, they suggest that the test developers in Turkey should design English proficiency tests including all the basic language skills so that the academicians in Turkey can keep up with their foreign counterparts in the academic world. To alleviate the exam-related stress of the Turkish academicians, they recommend that rather than focusing on academic promotion, authorities in Turkey should deal with the problems of the teaching-learning process, academicians' language needs, materials and curricular objectives.

According to the participants of the current study, the use of audio-visual materials like videos should also be promoted in the program. It is pointed out that visual aids raise the effectiveness of the EFL classroom teaching-learning process (Joshi, 1995). Besides, some participants believed that the assessment should be based on regular tests, especially on mock exams during the program rather than exit tests only administered at the end of the program. In other words, formative evaluation (i.e., reflection journals, assignments) considered to be an assessment procedure improving learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998) should be applied more into the curriculum than the summative evaluation procedures (i.e., final examinations, term papers) that are product-oriented.

Along with these suggestions to improve the specific components of the language curriculum, both research assistants and English language instructors made general recommendations for the improvement of the program. To illustrate, research assistants highlighted issues, such as the need to incorporate more mock exams, extend the length of the program and the personal consultancy service hours, have regular meetings, reduce the homework load, include more four-skill based and vocabulary activities, receive written feedback on their assignment and conduct a needs analysis. As pointed by Weddel and Van Duzer (1997), students' needs for the literacy skills and academic English could best be determined through a needs analysis.

English language instructors, on the other hand, suggested a revision of the program in line with the proficiency levels of the research assistants, the inclusion of exam strategies and the extension of the duration of the program. Also, some of them underlined the need to focus on teaching four language skills. Experts like Nunan (1989) and Willis (1996) argue for the design of teaching materials and courses in line with the integration of a variety of language skills.

Moreover, some English instructors suggested that raising research assistants' motivation level is also important for the TSTP. It is known that motivation is widely accepted as the invisible go-power driving people to learn a language and encouraging them to sustain their effort to reach their foreign language learning goals (Gardner, 2001). Finally, some instructors believed in the merits of peer observation as a means of increasing their quality of teaching in the program. The practice of peer observation, namely observation by a colleague, was recommended by many researchers specialized in English language teaching (e.g., Richards & Farrell, 2005; Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999; Farrell, 1999).

By taking into account the needs of research assistants and the suggestions made by the English language instructors, the EFL curriculum in the context of this study could be revised. We would like to conclude by referring back to the quotation of Karakaş (2012) emphasizing that many academicians end up their career without benefiting from their long-term investment by doing MA and PhD because of failure to pass English proficiency exams or to publish in English, both of which are requirement for academic promotion in Turkey.

In conclusion, the TSTP program in Turkey is crucial to prepare young academicians for the academic community dominated by the English language. Although these suggestions are unique to the context of the study, which is the EFL program applied within the TSTP in a large state university in Turkey, it can be considered that such studies in other TSTP contexts both in Turkey and in similar contexts in the world will help the English curriculum designers, teachers, administrators and even the policy-makers understand the English needs of the academicians and the expectations from such English preparation courses addressing to new academicians.

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