

An Analysis on the Attitudes of Students of Vocational School of Health Services towards Professional English Course

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Abstract

It is inevitable to deny the significance of professional English education. The students attending Vocational Schools have general English course in their first year and in the second year they end their English education with professional English course. It plays a crucial role in preparing students for their vocational career. Theoretically the contribution of professional English course to the vocational career of the students is visible. However, whether this contribution in practice comes true or not depends on various factors and one of the most significant is the attitudes of the students towards professional English course. There are lots of factors affecting the aforementioned attitudes of the students.

The aim of this study is to research on the attitudes of the students towards professional English course. To carry out the aim of this study, the questionnaire "Attitudes of Students towards Professional English Course" will be conducted on 67 students studying at Vocational School of Health Services of Erzincan University and the results will be discussed in detail.

This study is expected to contribute to the improvement of quality of professional English course in Erzincan Vocational School of Health Services to increase the productivity of vocational career of the students.

Keywords: *Attitudes of Students, Professional English Course, Vocational Career, Vocational School of Health Services, Erzincan University.*

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Sađlık Meslek Yksekokulu đrencilerinin Mesleki İngilizce Dersine Karşı Tutumları zerine Analiz

z

Mesleki İngilizce eđitimi inkar edilemeyecek bir neme sahiptir. Meslek Yksekokullarında eđitim gren đrenciler ilk akademik yılda genel İngilizce dersi almakta ve ikinci yılda ise İngilizce eđitimlerini Mesleki İngilizce dersi ile sonlandırmaktadır. Mesleki İngilizce dersi ile son bulan bu eđitim đrencileri mesleki kariyerlerine hazırlamada byk bir nem tařımaktadır.

Teorik aıdan, Mesleki İngilizce dersinin đrencilerin mesleki kariyerlerine olan katkısı aıka grlmektedir. Fakat, bu katkının pratikte gerekleřip gerekleřmemesi eřitli faktrlere bađlıdır ve bunların en nemlilerinin biri de Mesleki İngilizce dersine karřı đrencilerin tutumlarıdır. Bahsedilen tutumları etkileyen de birok faktr bulunmaktadır.

Bu alıřmanın amacı Mesleki İngilizce dersine karřı đrencilerin tutumlarını arařtırmaktır. Bu amacı gerekleřtirmek iin "Mesleki İngilizce Dersine Karřı đrencilerin Tutumları" bařlıklı anket Erzincan niversitesi Sađlık Meslek Yksekokulu'nda eđitim alan 67 đrenciye uygulanmıřtır. Sonular ise detaylı bir řekilde ele alınacaktır.

Bu alıřmanın đrencilerin mesleki kariyerlerindeki verimliliklerini arttırmak iin Erzincan niversitesi Sađlık Meslek Yksekokul' undaki Mesleki İngilizce dersinin kalitesini arttırması beklenmektedir.

***Anahtar Kelimeler:** đrencilerin Tutumları, Mesleki İngilizce Dersi, Mesleki Kariyer, Sađlık Meslek Yksekokulu, Erzincan niversitesi.*

Introduction

Being a lingua franca the need to learn English is rising day by day. The improvements in technology and economy, rising labor mobility around the world make it necessary for all the people. Besides this, in order to improve yourself individually and have a command of your field, you need to read the information related to the field; and that means you need to learn English. In order to communicate effectively in a conference, seminar, session or lecture, it is vital to know English. This fact shows clearly the significance of English for Specific Purposes (hereinafter referred to as ESP) (Ünal, 2014, p. 418).

There are some studies carried out on professional English course in health or medical field in Turkey. Ayas and Kırkgöz's (2013) investigation about the perceptions of the nursing and midwifery students on their academic and vocational needs of English can be named. According to their studies, the students found the course materials insufficient, thought that they should be improved and the language instruction of the instructors do not help the students well improve themselves in professional English course and want to improve four skills of English, particularly speaking and listening when compared with the reading and writing skills in their field (Ayas and Kırkgöz, 2013). In Özer and Yılmaz's (2016) study carried out to determine the attitudes of students towards vocational foreign language course at two vocational colleges of Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, it was found out that they generally have positive attitudes. Except this, Taşçı (2007) carried out a study about professional English needs of medical students to improve the medical purposes curriculum development. As a result of the analysis, Taşçı (2007) found out that students find speaking skill very significant in addition to reading skill and it is necessary to increase the class hours, entegrate technological equipments to the class and appoint some trained instructors to make the class more efficient. Besides, Akgül (1991) carried out a study for a needs analysis of medical students in professional English course at Erciyes University. Alagözlü (1994) made a study about the English language needs of fourth year students at Medical Faculty of Cumhuriyet University and mentioned translation as an important skill in his study. These studies showed that English is considered crucial in students' career (Taşçı, 2007, p. 5). As clearly seen, most of the studies in Turkey are old and are about the professional English needs of medical students. However, this study focuses on analyzing the attitudes of students of Vocational School of Health Services towards professional English course. The difference of this study from the previous ones is that it is carried on the students attending Vocational School of Health Services at Erzincan University who are

deemed as not very motivated for the professional English course and do not have a great deal of background information in English, which makes the study more specific.

As for Dudley-Evans & St. John (2001), ESP has been a very crucial field since 1960s for the reason that it considers the needs and interests of the learners. Hence, the request for ESP goes on to go up in the world (Ayas, 2013, p. 1). Brunton (2009) states that “ESP has increased over the decades as a result of market forces and a greater awareness amongst the academic and business community that learners’ needs and wants should be met wherever possible” (p. 2). Rasekh and Simin (2011) assert that a significant aspect of language instruction at a tertiary level is learning English for a given purpose, with the specific aims of getting to know specialized vocabulary, enlarging one's knowledge of the subject matter by reading in English and being able to use the language in the prospective profession or study areas by becoming prepared for some common situations such as carrying out higher level studies, going for an interview or conducting professional correspondence (p. 2).

In line with the explanation above, as for Lorenzo (2005), “ESP students are usually adults who already have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job-related functions”. According to Minaabad and Khoshkholgh (2012), “ESP is a kind of English teaching/learning approach which is designed to meet the students’ specific requirements at a tertiary level or vocational/occupational institutions” (p. 251). Hutchinson and Waters (2004) define ESP as an “an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning, and which is directed by specific and apparent reasons for learning” (p. 19). Harding (2007) states that “...in ESP – English for Specific Purposes – the purpose for learning the language is paramount and relates directly to what the learner needs to do in their vocation or job” (p. 3). Richards (2001) supports this by saying, “an important principle of ESP approaches to language teaching is that the purposes for which a learner needs a language rather than a syllabus reflecting the structure of general English should be used in planning a course” (p. 32). That is to say, what distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need (Hutchinson and Waters, 1991, p. 53).

Hutchinson and Waters (1991) make some divisions in English Language Teaching on a tree shown below in Figure 1. On the top as seen there are branches of ESP. ESP may be divided into two regarding whether the student is learning English for academic study

(English for Academic Purposes) or for work/training (EOP /EVP /VESL: English for Occupational Purposes/English for Vocational Purposes/Vocational English as a Second Language) Hutchinson and Waters (1991) state that there is “not a clear-cut distinction: people can work and study simultaneously; it is also likely that in many cases the language learnt for immediate use in a study environment will be used later when the student takes up, or returns to, a job” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1991, p. 16).

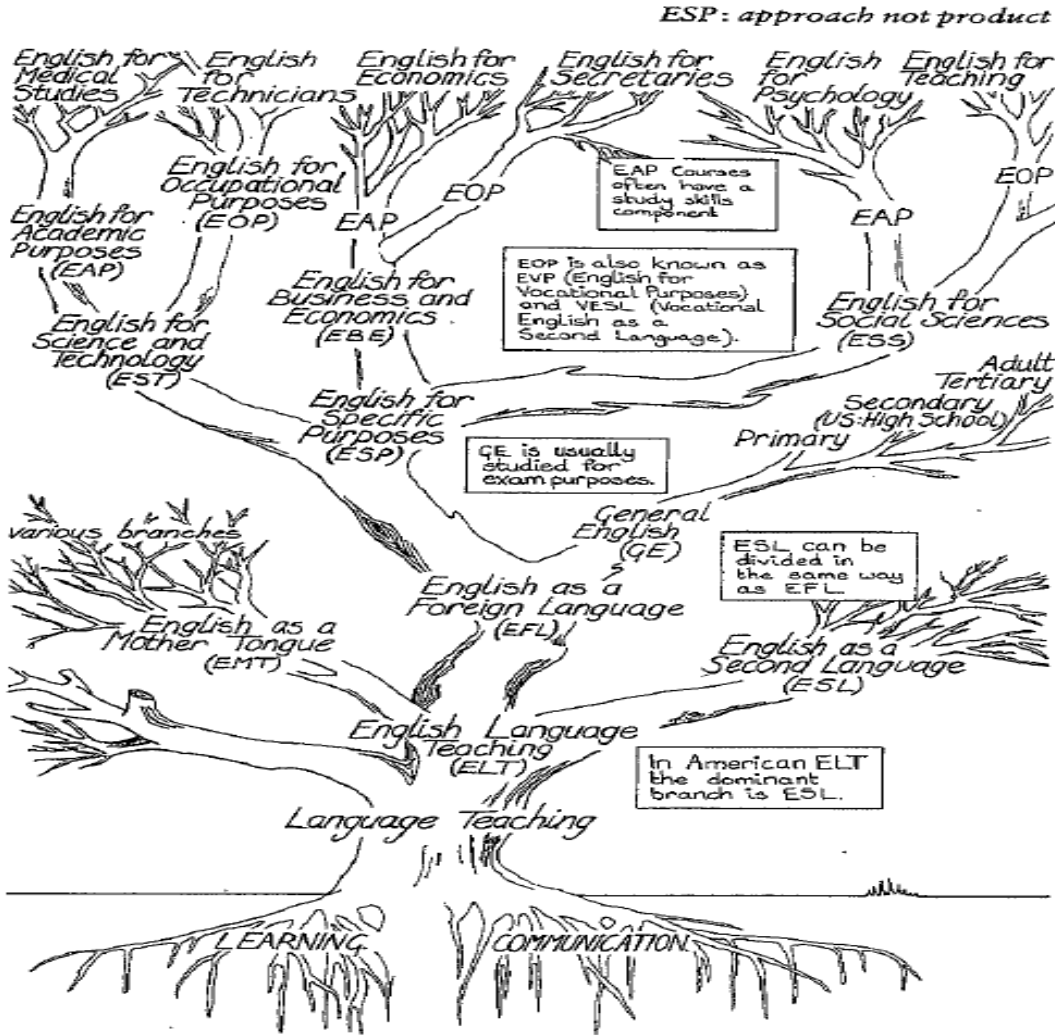


Figure 1.

The Tree of ELT (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p. 17)

EVP is the main focus in this study. For students, learning general English is not enough for some individuals who want to improve themselves in a specific direction according to their aims in their professional career (Ünal, 2014, p. 419). In Vocational School of Health Services of Erzincan University, students learn English for vocational purposes (communication with foreign patients in a hospital, working in a hospital abroad, reading academic materials in their field and etc.) for the reason that it is certain that ESP has some

influences on meeting the carrier needs of the students (Lee, 1998, p. 55). ESP is significant in terms of making the students' preparation for professional needs, training and study. In the field of medicine, there are some distinct terminology, concepts and descriptions in English. To carry out the aim above in their career, the students are required to have the sufficient in their field. Professional English course makes them specialize in job-related English as terminology, medical abbreviations or simple everyday dialogues in English so that they can utilize in their daily career effectively (Lee, 1998, p. 56). In parallel with the points above, health students at Erzincan University are expected to know the English in their field owing to the fact that they may work abroad, communicate with foreign patients, improve themselves by reading the latest developments in their fields with the help of the journals or publications on health (Ayas, 2013, p. 2). For this reason, professional English course plays a crucial role.

As said beforehand, there are many factors affecting the contribution of the afore-mentioned course and in the course of academic year, the researcher observed that one of the most important one is the attitudes of the students towards professional English course.

Language attitude is defined in Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2010) as

The attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language. Language attitudes may have an effect on second language or foreign language learning. The measurement of language attitudes provides information which is useful in language teaching and language planning. (p. 314)

Traditionally, attitude is defined as a permanent and complex fact which leads the individual to behave in a certain way. In language learning process, it is definitely should be considered. The attitudes of learners are affected by a great many factors (Çakıcı, 2007, p. 23). Chambers (1999) explains this by saying “pupils do not come to the foreign languages classroom as tabula rasa. They bring with them some attitudes born of conversations shared with family, friends, the media and personal experience of the target language community” (p. 25). According to Ellis (1994), learners' attitudes towards not only language, but also the target language community and culture influences his/her learning (p. 23). Mitchell and Myles (1998), states that “social psychologists have long been interested in the idea that the attitude of the learner towards the target language, its speakers, and the learning context may all play some part in explaining success or lack of it” (p. 19).

The attitudes of the students at Vocational School of Health Services of Erzincan University spring from some factors as well some of which will be focused on in detail in the analysis section of this article.

In line with the information given, the aim of this study is to make a research on the attitudes of the students studying at Vocational School of Health Services of Erzincan University and to focus on particularly some questions asked in the questionnaire in order to determine the contribution of the course to the vocational career of the students practically. According to the results, the study is expected to make a contribution to the improvement of the quality of the professional English course with the purpose in mind to increase the productivity of the students in their field.

The research questions of this study below were asked to carry out the aim hereinabove:

1. To what extent does the method of teaching, materials used in the course influence the attitudes of the students towards professional English course?
2. Do the students think that professional English course is crucial in their career improvement?
3. Is there a relationship between the attitudes of students towards the method of teaching and attitudes of students towards English being beneficial to their career?

The answers of these questions are very related to the questions below asked in the questionnaire of this study.

Question 9: Materials for professional English course are sufficient.

Question 16: I like the teaching method of professional English course.

Question 19: I want professional English course to be more entertaining.

Question 21: I like professional English course because it is useful for me.

Question 22: I am happy to learn information about my field in professional English course.

Question 23: The eagerness of my professional English course instructor in teaching makes the course more enjoyable.

Question 27: The topics in professional English course are sufficient.

Question 32: I like sharing information that I have learned in professional English course with others.

Question 33: The idea that the information I have learned in my professional English course may be beneficial in my career motivates me to learn more in the course.

In order to answer the research questions above, a quantitative method which encompasses the sample, data collection and analysis method will be discussed below.

2. Method

2.1. Sample

The sample of this study comprises of the answers of 67 students out of 80 to the questionnaire, which is a sufficient number for the sample. The study was carried out at four departments of Vocational School of Health Services of Erzincan University: Pediatric Development, Medical Documentation and Secretaryship, Patient Care at Home and Disaster and Emergency Management.

2.2. Data Collection

Data have been obtained as a result of application of the modified form of attitude scale that was developed by Güven-Uzman (2006), to find out the attitudes towards Geography. The questionnaire consisted of 34 questions and personal information questions composed of three questions. Then, the questionnaire was administered to a total of 67 students. Then, the analyses were calculated by means of the data obtained.

2.3. Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed by using the SPSS for Windows 21 programme. In the course of analysis of data, Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis Tests were applied.

3. Findings

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was measured to be 0,954. This result shows that the questionnaire is utmost reliable.

In this study, the questionnaire was applied to 75 students. However, questionnaires of 8 students were not been evaluated due to the deficient and faulty answers. In total, 67 questionnaires were evaluated. As clearly known, the data obtained from all the questionnaires does not follow normal distribution. Hence, for the analysis non-parametric tests were preferred. Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis one way analysis tests that were deemed as appropriate for the analysis of this study will be utilized.

3.1. The Viewpoints of the Students on the Instructor of the Course

Teacher also plays a role in the process of language learning because he is model for the students. The teacher's role is unignorably in terms of motivational and attitudinal framework (Çakıcı, 2007, p. 23). Cook (1994) supports this by saying that “...teachers have to be aware of the reservations and preconceptions of their students. What they think of the teacher, and what they think of course heavily affect their success” (p. 75).

H_1 : According to their gender, the viewpoints of the students on the instructor of the course are different.

Table: 1

Test statistics and report regarding H_1

Gender	Median	Mann-Whitney U	Sig.
Female	2,00	456,000	1,000
Male	2,00		

For the reason that p value is $1,000 > 0,05$ H_1 hypothesis is rejected. That is to say, the viewpoints of the students on the instructor of the course according to their gender are not different. Additionally, according to the median of the answers given by the students, it was seen that both female and male students gave mostly the answer “agree”. On “the sufficiency of the instructor and her friendly attitude towards the students”, the students are in the same mind.

H_2 : According to their departments, the viewpoints of the students on the instructor of the course are different.

Table: 2

Test statistics and report regarding H_2

Department	Median	Chi- Square	Sig.
Disaster and Emergency Management	3,00	8,712	0,033
Patient Care at Home	2,00		
Medical Documentation and Secretaryship	2,00		
Pediatric Development	1,75		

For the reason that p value is $0,033 < 0,05$ H_2 hypothesis is accepted. That is to say, the viewpoints of the students on the instructor of the course according to their departments are not different. Accordingly, the students studying in the departments of pediatric development, patient care at home and Medical Documentation and Secretaryship gave mostly the answer “agree”, but the students studying at the department of Disaster and Emergency Management gave the answer of “uncertain”.

3.2. The Viewpoints of the Students on the Effect of the Course on Their Career

It is required to design a professional English course so as to be beneficial in their future career. Thus, the instructor of the course has to make the students ready on their field so that they can communicate well in the future.

H_3 : According to their gender, the viewpoints of the students on the effect of the course on their career are different.

Table: 3

Test statistics and report regarding H_3

Gender	Median	Mann-Whitney U	Sig.
Female	2,25	444,500	0,872
Male	2,00		

For the reason that p value is $0,872 > 0,05$ H_3 hypothesis is rejected. That is to say, the viewpoints of the students on the effect of the course on their career are not different. Additionally, according to the median of the answers given by the students, it was seen that both female and male students gave mostly the answer “agree”. About “the importance of the course on their career” the students are in the same mind.

H_4 : According to their departments, the viewpoints of the students on the effect of the course on their career are different.

Table: 4

Test statistics and report regarding H_4

Department	Median	Chi- Square	Sig.
Disaster and Emergency Management	3,00	11,681	0,009
Patient Care at Home	3,00		
Medical Documentation and Secretaryship	2,00		
Pediatric Development	2,00		

For the reason that p value is $0,009 < 0,05$ H_4 hypothesis is accepted. That is to say, the viewpoints of the students on the effect of the course on their career are not different. Accordingly, while the students studying in the departments of pediatric development and Medical Documentation and Secretaryship gave mostly the answer “agree”, the students studying at the department of Disaster and Emergency Management and patient care at home gave the answer of “uncertain”.

3.3. The Viewpoints of the Students on the Teaching Method of the Course

It is certain that attitude is not something fixed. It may be modified with regard to some factors. If the students have a negative attitude towards the course, here burdens a responsibility on the shoulders of the teacher. The teacher at first should learn the reasons of this negative attitude and then apply appropriate techniques, additional materials such as video, pictures, computer games or etc in order to carry out successful language learning (Çakıcı, 2007, pp. 21-35).

Throughout the academic year, the instructor of the course applied integrated approach to teach the vocabulary in the field and grammar translation method.

Medical English teaching definitely requires vocabulary knowledge. Laar (1988), states that it is possible to it with integrated approach. Integrated approach may help in that issue in terms of the relationship between Latin and the field of medicine. This kind of approach both saves a great amount of time and broadens the perspective of the student (pp. 171-174). To teach vocabulary the medical jargon, medical register and discourse have to be combined together to carry aout a successful medical English teaching. The main questions to be asked are who these medical learners are and what their purposes are (Taşçı, 2007, pp. 25-26). By regarding these questions, the instructor preferred to teach medical vocabulary in specific contexts and with reading passages on the health related topic. By this way, the communicative skills of the students could be improved well.

Besides, the instructor occasionally applied grammar translation method by regarding those students does not only need English for interpersonal communication but also they need it to update their vocational knowledge by reading specialized articles or texts in their field (Choroleeva, 2012, p. 5). According to Duff (1994), translation method is “uncommunicative, boring, pointless, difficult, and irrelevant”. However, lately an interest has risen again to translation because it develops three qualities in language learning: accuracy, clarity and flexibility (Kavaliauskienė and Kaminskienė, 2007, p. 132). Translation plays a role in improving the interlingual language competence of the students (Al Amir and Abdul Rouf, 2004, p. 4). With this method learners compare L1 and L2 improve their language usage and combine everything they have learnt up to that time (Kavaliauskienė and Kaminskienė, 2007, p. 132). Translation also develops the awareness of the students on vocabulary, grammar, style and language transfer (Kavaliauskienė and

Kaminskienė, 2007, p. 18). That's why sometimes it is the context of ESP is considered is the fifth language skill (Benabdallah, 2013, p. 5).

Additionally, in the second term of the academic year, the students in all the departments were given some specific topics such as organs, smoking, pregnancy and etc for role play activity. Students learn English with drama by having more motivation, entertainment, fun and other different things in order to explain themselves more freely in the process of acting (Saygılı, 2014, p. 11). In the article 'Applying Drama Techniques in Teaching English in Iran' by Moghaddas, and Ghafarinia (1981), cited in Holden, mention the importance of some diverse activities in speaking: "Drama here means any practical and educational activity which stimulates the use of language in everyday life and involves some amount of imaginary situation" (p. 24). Fang (2010), stated that;

Objective of English is to develop students' ability to use English in an all-round way, especially in listening and speaking so that in their future work and social interactions they will be able to exchange information effectively through both spoken and written channels (p. 111).

As a great speaking activity drama plays a very significant role in English because while performing drama students are expected to practice all the things they have learnt in the class (Saygılı, 2014, p. 6). As Oradee (2012), stressed that "English teaching and learning have the goal of focusing students so that they are able use English for communication" (p. 553).

As Moghaddas, and Ghafarinia, cited in Desiatova (2009), makes a good explanation on some good sides of using drama in the classes as follows:

It causes learners in using the language for genuine communication and real life purposes. It makes language learning and active, motivating, experiences. It gives confidence and self-esteem to learners in using the language spontaneously. It brings the real world into the classroom. It helps the students in acquiring the language through play, make-believe and meaningful interaction. It makes the learning items memorable through direct experiences affects emotion with different learning styles. When dramatizing students make use of all the appropriate channels. It stimulates learners' intellect and imagination. It develops students' ability to emphasize with others and become better communicators. It helps learners in acquiring the language by focusing on the message not the form of their utterance (p. 26).

H_5 : According to their gender, the viewpoints of the students on the teaching method of the course are different.

Table: 5

Test statistics and report regarding H_5

Gender	Median	Mann-Whitney U	Sig.
Female	2,00	452,500	0,961
Male	2,00		

For the reason that p value is $0,961 > 0,05$ H_5 hypothesis is rejected. That is to say, the viewpoints of the students on the teaching method of the course according to their gender are not different. Additionally, according to the median of the answers given by the students, it was seen that both female and male students gave mostly the answer “agree”. The students are in the same mind on their “liking of the teaching method of the course.”

H_6 : According to their departments, the viewpoints of the students on the effect of the course on their career are different.

Table: 6

Test statistics and report regarding H_6

Department	Median	Chi- Square	Sig.
Disaster and Emergency Management	2,75	3,924	0,270
Patient Care at Home	2,00		
Medical Documentation and Secretaryship	2,25		
Pediatric Development	2,00		

For the reason that p value is $0,270 > 0,05$ H_6 hypothesis is rejected. That is to say, the viewpoints of the students on the teaching method of the course according to their departments are not different. Accordingly, the students studying at all the departments gave mostly the answer of “agree”.

3.4. The Viewpoints of the Students on the Sufficiency of the Course Materials

At first, the instructor provided many kinds of different materials to the students. By considering the educational background of the students, that is to say, their English education with distance learning in their first year, the instructor made a revision on general English for two weeks, which was necessary to prepare the students for the professional English course. Afterwards, the students were offered additional practical worksheets before the coursebook in order to make them familiar with the common expressions and phrases in their field.

The course book was Vocational Medical English by Claire L. Kılınç by Gündüz Publishing House. In each chapter of the course book was supplemented with the required grammar

information and then the professional part was provided with a great many examples on the field. Except these, some videos or animations related with the topic of the week from official youtube pages and such other web-sites (for instance, Pink Panther in “The Pink Pill” video) were watched by the students and students were wanted to write down the phrases on their field.

H_7 : The viewpoints of the students on the sufficiency of the course materials according to their gender are different.

Table: 7

Test statistics and report regarding H_7

Gender	Median	Mann-Whitney U	Sig.
Female	2,00	419,000	0,593
Male	3,00		

For the reason that p value is $0,593 > 0,05$ H_7 hypothesis is rejected. That is to say, the viewpoints of the students on the sufficiency of the course materials according to their gender are not different. Additionally, according to the median of the answers given by the students, it was seen that both female students gave mostly the answer “agree” and male students gave mostly the answer of “uncertain”. However, it was found out that the students generally gave the answer of “agree”. This result shows that the students are in the same mind on “the sufficiency of the course materials”.

H_8 : The viewpoints of the students on the sufficiency of the course materials according to their departments are different.

Table: 8

Test statistics and report regarding H_8

Department	Median	Chi- Square	Sig.
Disaster and Emergency Management	4,00	3,759	0,289
Patient Care at Home	2,00		
Medical Documentation and Secretaryship	2,00		
Pediatric Development	3,00		

For the reason that p value is $0,289 > 0,05$ H_8 hypothesis is rejected. That is to say, the viewpoints of the students on the sufficiency of the course materials are not different. Accordingly, the students studying at all the departments gave mostly the answer of “agree”. Nevertheless, the students studying at the department of Disaster and Emergency Management gave the answer of “disagree” and students studying in the departments of pediatric development gave the answer of “uncertain”.

Discussion&Results

In line with the aim of this study, some particular questions were foregrounded and four different headings were composed regarding the aforementioned questions. The headings were analyzed according to the gender and department of the students.

These headings were respectively;

1. The viewpoints of the students on the instructor of the course (Question 8, 24)
2. The viewpoints of the students on the effect of the course on their career (Question 21, 22, 32, 33)
3. The viewpoints of the students on the teaching method of the course (Question 16, 19, 23, 27)
4. The viewpoints of the students on the sufficiency of the course materials (Question 9)

According to the results of the study, most of the students gave the answer of "agree" to the related questions. Thus, it is possible to say that most of the students have positive attitude towards professional English course. The reason of this positive attitude towards professional English course probably springs from the fact that the instructor's knowledge and motivation and friendly behaviors since it was found out that all these make the students have positive attitude towards professional English course and the teaching method of the instructor works well and the materials used in the class are sufficient. Hence, as a final result, it was found out that the students find the professional English course necessary for and beneficial to their future career. This final result shows that there is a very close relationship between the teaching method of the instructor, materials used and attitudes of the students towards professional English course.

Finally, this study is believed to be a significant source for the instructors who want to make the professional English course effective and beneficial in the future career of the students in practice. As a result of the analysis of hypothesizes, it was found out that both male and female students generally gave positive answers to the questions asked on the sufficiency of the course materials and teaching method and the effect of the course on their career. Thus, as suggestion, the teachers can add some extra materials such as videos and encourage students to perform role-plays about their field together with the course book provided to the students to motivate them for more learning in professional English course.

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