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Selda Ozer

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A Qualitative Study to Determine Expectations of Students Studying at a Faculty of Tourism from Vocational English Course

Selda Özer

Nevsehir Hacı Bektas Veli University

Abstract

The aim of the research is to determine the expectations of the students studying at Faculty of Tourism from a Vocational English course. Qualitative research method, phenomenological design and convenient sampling technique were used in the research. Study group included the students who study at two departments, Tourism Management and Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, at a Faculty of Tourism in Turkey and who take Vocational English course for the first time. The study group was determined purposefully in that the researcher would teach Vocational English to the students in 2017-2018 fall semester. The students who attended the course in the first week of the semester participated in the study voluntarily. Data were analyzed by content analysis. The findings of the study showed that the expectations of students from vocational English course clustered around four main themes as objectives, content, teaching-learning process and assessment.

Keywords: Expectation, qualitative study, Faculty of Tourism, vocational English course.

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ⁱ **Selda Özer**, Instructor Dr., Department of School of Foreign Languages, Nevsehir Hacı Bektas Veli University, Nevsehir, Turkey.

Correspondence: sozer@nevsehir.edu.tr

Introduction

Faculties of tourism are higher education institutions and cover at least eight semesters and four years based on secondary education. The main objective of tourism education institutions is to contribute the development of tourism sector by giving basic education as well as tourism awareness and philosophy to the students who will work in tourism sector and thus to provide skilled personnel for tourism sector (Üzümcü & Alyakut, 2017). In other words, the aim of faculties of tourism is to prepare students for the job market right after graduation helping students receive vocational training and practical internship.

Faculties of tourism have different departments, such as tourism management, gastronomy and culinary arts, tourism guidance, recreation management. The department of tourism management targets to train qualified personnel, middle and upper management candidates for the tourism sector by providing contemporary, scientific and qualified education and training in the field of tourism management. For this purpose, the students are equipped with knowledge and skills about information technologies, tourism industry and tourism businesses, contemporary management and two foreign languages one of which is English. The department of gastronomy and culinary arts aims to train qualified chefs for the accommodation and catering businesses. In the direction of this goal, students are supplied with two foreign languages one of which is English, information technologies, tourism sector and tourism businesses, contemporary management and leadership, Turkish cuisine, International cuisine, principles of nutrition, food science and technology, and food and beverage production (<https://portal.nevsehir.edu.tr>). As seen from the aims of departments, English language is very important for faculties of tourism and tourism sector. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) becomes vital for students at faculties of tourism in that they need the language for their profession.

Faculties of tourism offer vocational English courses, a branch of ESP, generally for four semesters. The students who will take the course for the first time have some expectations from the course. Chu and Huang (2007) claim that exploring students' expectations in an English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom assists teachers to select and design materials and choose appropriate methods leading to improve both their performance and students' dynamic and autonomous learning. Moreover, Lobo and Gurney (2014) point out the importance of students' expectations and regard that their expectations are one of the most crucial variables at tertiary education level, particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms because students expect a lot from ESL courses. If their expectations are satisfied, it will influence their attitudes toward and engagement with the course. In order to meet their expectations from the course or to provide a curriculum as close to their expectations as possible will help to achieve the aims of the departments.

When the literature is reviewed, it is observed that the number of research about vocational English course at tertiary education is limited. There are many studies about general English at tertiary education (Al-Issa, 2017; Kaçar and Zengin, 2009; Crosling and Ward, 2002; Warden and Lin, 2000), curriculum of English language course in vocational colleges (Ödemiş, Yüksel and Ünal, 2014), second foreign language (Balci, 2016), preparatory classes for departments of tourism (Davras and Bulgan, 2012) and different departments at universities (Şen Ersoy and Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu, 2015), tourism education at universities (Üzümcü and Alyakut, 2017) and students' perceptions of English courses at vocational high schools (Hau and Beverton, 2013). On the other hand, Özer and Yılmaz (2017) carried out a research directly about vocational English course at departments of tourism. Thus, the study will shed further light on the matter. Taking these into account, the study aims to determine the expectations of students studying at a faculty of tourism from vocational English course. Some suggestions will be made to guide instructors of English how to design the curriculum of vocational English course to meet the expectations and enhance the quality of vocational English course and vocational education.

Method

Research Design

The research was designed as a phenomenological study. In the phenomenology design, the research focuses on how people perceive a particular phenomenon, how they describe it, what they feel about it, how they judge it, how they remember it, how they understand it, and how they talk about it with others (Patton, 2014). Phenomenological study was used in the study because the expectations of students studying at a Faculty Tourism from the Vocational English course would be determined.

Participants

Convenient sampling method was used in the study. The study group was composed of the students who would take Vocational English course for the first time in fall semester of 2017-2018 academic year. The students study at the departments of Tourism Management and Gastronomy and Culinary Arts. Students who participated in the first lesson of Vocational English course at the first week of the semester constituted the study group and students participated in the study voluntarily. The students were also informed that information obtained would be used only for scientific purposes and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The demographic features of the study group are given in Table 1.

Table 1. The demographic features of the study group

Demographic features		f
Gender	Female	13
	Male	24
	Total	37
Department	Tourism Management	25
	Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	12
	Total	37

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 13 of 37 students who participated in the study were female and 24 were male. 25 of these students were studying Tourism Management and 12 of them were studying Gastronomy and Culinary Arts.

Data collection tool

In the study, the students were asked "What are your expectations from Vocational English course?" They were required to express their thoughts in own handwriting.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by content analysis method. In content analysis, first of all, coding was used to make sense of the concepts in the data. The similarities and differences of the codes were determined, and the codes related to each other were grouped together and the themes were determined. The codes and themes were then checked by an external researcher. Direct quotations were included in the study so that the views of the participants can be reflected more accurately. When the opinions of the students were quoted, "S" letter was used for each student and numerical codes of 1, 2, 3, 4 ... were used for the order of handing over the forms.

Findings

Opinions of students about their expectations from Vocational English course were examined and the expectations of the students were gathered under four main themes as objectives, content, teaching-learning process and assessment. Findings related to the themes were given below.

Findings related to theme “objectives”

It has been observed that the expectations of the students from the Vocational English course were based on two subthemes as expectations about personal development and expectations after graduation under the main theme “objectives”. These sub-themes and categories are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Expectations from the course objectives

Theme	Subthemes	Categories
Objectives	Expectations about personal development	Contribution to personal development Developing speaking skills Improving current English level Contribution to communicate easily Improving vocabulary Improving grammar Improving writing skills Improving reading/comprehension skills Contribution to speak fluently
	Expectations after graduation	Contribution to professional life Facilitating work and internship Facilitating finding jobs Contribution to daily life

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the subtheme “expectations about personal development” was composed of nine categories as “contribution to personal development”, “developing speaking skills”, “improving current English level”, “contribution to communicate easily”, “improving vocabulary”, “improving grammar”, “improving writing skills”, “improving reading/comprehension skills” and “contribution to speak fluently”. Opinions of some student about these categories are as follows:

S8: *“The course should help us learn the words and phrases that we can use in our professional life, and use them practically in the classroom so we will be able to speak without thinking about making mistakes in the future. It should help us develop confidence without excitement and comfortably. There should be activities requiring speaking. ... We can make new sentences by learning new words.”*

S11: *“I expect to improve my professional knowledge while developing my general English skills. When I talk in my profession, I want to be able to master English.”*

S33: *“My expectation from the course is to be able to speak in English. I just want to talk. The grammar does not help us speak very well in daily life.”*

S34: *“My expectations from the course are to improve my current English, to get higher levels and to improve professional vocabulary and pronunciation. When this year is over, I want to speak English fluently.”*

S35: *“First, I want to add something to my current English language skills. I also think I will benefit from this course and it will help me in my professional life in the future. I hope that I I will make the best of the course and I will do my best.”*

Likewise, when Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the subtheme “expectations after graduation” was composed of four categories as “contribution to professional life”, “facilitating work and internship”, “facilitating finding jobs” and “contribution to daily life”. Opinions of some student about these categories are given below:

S9: *“I think that we can learn, understand and comprehend the techniques, speaking styles and new words that we can use in tourism sector or in other sectors, which we can use in many fields of our lives. We will be able to learn all of them during a whole year and the most efficiently. I think the Vocational English course will provide a meaning and significance in our lives if we meet the case with our own efforts.”*

S12: *“I believe that it will be useful to express myself better in my relations with tourists or other people in the sector in the future. With the language I will learn in Vocational English course, I believe I can get better positions and work in higher levels in a business.”*

S16: *“When I learn professional vocabulary (words, terms, phrases), I can communicate with the guests more easily. It will be easier for me to work in tourism. It will also be easier when doing the internship. I do not have any difficulty working in the department I want. It will make it easier for me to find a job.”*

Findings related to theme “content”

The second theme regarding the expectations of the students from the Vocational English course was called as content. The categories of the theme are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Expectations from the course content

Theme	Categories
Content	Including professional terms/vocabulary
	Learning patterns in sentences
	Being an important lesson for the department
	Not just giving importance to grammar
	Giving importance to grammar
Organizing subjects from general to specific	

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the theme “content” was composed of six categories as “including professional terms/vocabulary”, “learning patterns in sentences”, “being an important lesson for the department”, “not just giving importance to grammar”, “giving importance to grammar” and “organizing subjects from general to specific”. Opinions of some student about these categories are as the following:

S3: *“Vocational English course means tourism terms, professional patterns, words, expressions and phrases. I think that all the subjects in the course will include these words, expressions, terms, phrases, patterns about tourism. ...”*

S18: *“I think Vocational English course will involve a lot of terms and phrases related to tourism. Speaking skill will be more important than grammar. ... This is a course designed from general to specific.”*

S25: *“I think this course will enable me to have a good communication with people in my professional life in the future. I think that it will improve me in my profession and help me get positions in the sector if I study hard. The course will also enable us to learn many expressions used in the hospitality industry.”*

S29: *“I think that Vocational English course is as important as general English for our department. I expect from the course to contribute us a lot for our professional life.”*

Findings related to theme “teaching-learning process”

It has been observed that the expectations of the students from the Vocational English course were based on two subthemes as expectations from the process and expectations from students under the main theme “teaching-learning process.” These sub-themes and categories are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Expectations from teaching-learning process

Theme	Subthemes	Categories
Teaching-learning process	Expectations from the process	Teaching based on speaking
		Teaching enjoyably
		Giving importance to pronunciation
		Giving importance to communication
		Making the course loved
		Offering more practice
		Not only teaching in English but also using Turkish
	Expectations from students	Giving importance to the course
		Revising subjects learnt in the course
		Reducing absenteeism
		Revising new vocabulary

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the subtheme “expectations from the process” was composed of seven categories as “teaching based on speaking”, “teaching enjoyably”, “giving importance to pronunciation”, “giving importance to communication”, “making the course loved”, “offering more practice” and “not only teaching in English but also using Turkish.” Opinions of some student about these categories are as follows:

S4: *“I think that the process will be more efficient by using Turkish in the course instead of completely teaching in English. I want to learn with activities in an enjoyable way. I do not want to get lost between pages and I do not want to fly off at a tangent.”*

S10: *“I expect to learn English well and improve my level, and then I want to be able to use it in my professional life. I want to love English. I want to love English. I think we will have enjoyable English lessons. I don’t want to learn the rules just on the book but I want be able to talk.”*

S14: *“I expect to be more conscious about English necessary for my department and to obtain information to take me a step further. I think the course will be instructed using dialogues and we will be able to speak more in the course.”*

S15: *“My expectation is to reach a level that we can speak enough because it is a competent of our department. I want to reach the advanced level generally in grammar and specifically in speaking, by learning both theoretically and practically. I want to communicate with foreign tourists easily. Conveying the message may sometimes be just using simple vocabulary needed for my profession. I think we should not just learn the grammar of English. I expect to pronounce correctly to be able to speak and communicate in English.”*

S27: *“I expect that Vocational English course will contribute me about both reading-comprehension skill and speaking skill. I think Vocational English course will be more enjoyable and this is a great advantage. ...”*

Similarly, when Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the subtheme “expectations from students” was composed of four categories as “giving importance to the course”, “revising subjects learnt in the

course”, “reducing absenteeism” and “revising new vocabulary”. Opinions of some student about these categories are given below:

S7: *“After graduating from school, I think that Vocational English course will determine the place and position in my professional life and that I will benefit a lot from what I have learned in tourism sector in the future. Of course, it is very important for me to attend and participate the lessons and to complete successfully in order to be able to do so.”*

S22: *“I expect from the Vocational English course to receive a more prospective and vocationally efficient instruction. I believe that this course will be based on mutual dialogues and will focus on speaking skills. I believe I will do my best. Everything we learn will help us in terms of profession in a positive way.”*

S24: *“I think that Vocational English is very important for us because we will be employed in tourism and we will always deal with tourists after we graduate. If we revise what we learn in the lessons, this contributes to us more. If we deal with activities based on conversations, we can get more efficiency.”*

Ö26: *“My expectations from Vocational English course are to improve my grammar, to my vocational vocabulary, to improve my speaking and writing skills, to practice more, to learn vocational English necessary for tourism in detail and to contribute to my professional life. In order for these expectations to come true, I will have to attend and participate in the lessons and revise what I learn.”*

S28: *“I believe that Vocational English course will be enjoyable. I think I can get a lot from the course for both my profession and myself. As usual, I will revise what I learn and repeat new vocabulary.”*

S31: *“In order to get better positions in my professional life, I will have to do my best in addition to what we learn in the lessons.”*

Ö37: *“I think Vocational English course will be for me. I think we will learn some patterns in sample conversations. It will also contribute to me professionally so I have to pay attention to the course.”*

Findings related to theme “assessment”

The fourth theme regarding the expectations of the students from the Vocational English course was called as assessment. The categories of the theme are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Expectations from the course assessment

Theme	Categories
Assessment	Being successful in the course
	Tasks and assignments being based on dialogues/conversations
	Role-playing dialogues/conversations
	Exams being not difficult

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that the theme “assessment” was composed of four categories as “being successful in the course”, “tasks and assignments being based on dialogues/conversations”, “role-playing dialogues/conversations”, and “exams being not difficult”. Opinions of some student about these categories are as the following:

S1: *“I feel I’ve always progressed in English in my education life. I’ve been successful before and I expect great success.”*

S5: *“Since the activities include Vocational English, we can study and practice them as if we were at work. Tasks and assignments may be based on dialogues/conversations. We can prepare dialogues and conversation at home and role play them in classroom. For example, we can prepare ordering food dialogues or conversations in a restaurant and we can role play them.”*

S13: *“I think we will learn professional vocabulary Vocational English course. I believe that the lessons will pass enjoyably. I think we will learn the sentences used in restaurants, food and beverage businesses and so we can express ourselves better. I hope we will study well, we will learn a lot, we will not have much difficulty in exams and we will finish this year successfully.”*

S20: *“Unlike previous English courses, in Vocational English course, we will learn vocabulary, terms and grammatical rules related to our department. Thus, I believe it will help us in our internship and in our professional life. I think I will be more successful in this year.”*

S30: *“My expectation from this course is to help me learn English necessary for professional life. I think I can get enough yield from the course. I believe I will have a successful year by doing my best.”*

Discussion

The findings of the study show that the expectations of students from vocational English course were gathered under four main themes as objectives, content, teaching-learning process and assessment. The first main theme “objectives” consists of two sub-themes as “expectations about personal development” and “expectations after graduation”. The subtheme “expectations about personal development” include nine categories as “contribution to personal development”, “developing speaking skills”, “improving current English level”, “contribution to communicate easily”, “improving vocabulary”, “improving grammar”, “improving writing skills”, “improving reading/comprehension skills” and “contribution to speak fluently”. Likewise, Balçı (2016), in a qualitative study carried out with tourism undergraduates, finds out that personal development is among the reasons why students take a second foreign language course. These findings imply that students intend to learn vocational English to invest in their personal development, by acquiring the language ability to interact with tourists, that is, they expect to learn English not just for academically-oriented factors, such as passing exams but for practical factors.

The subtheme “expectations after graduation” consists of four categories as “contribution to professional life”, “facilitating work and internship”, “facilitating finding jobs” and “contribution to daily life”. Some studies supporting this finding are available in the literature. Balçı (2016) reveals that the most frequent reason of students’ taking second foreign language course is the desire to work in tourism sector. Undergraduate students participate in the optional English preparatory classes in order to contribute to their personal development and careers (Şen Ersoy and Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu, 2015); they regard English as the key to a successful professional life (Davras ve Bulgan, 2012); they consider learning English as a tool to make them more successful in life and they intend to learn English for communication purposes (Kaçar ve Zengin, 2009). The management staff, teaching staff and students think that the aim of English language curriculum at Vocational Colleges at higher education is to achieve a good knowledge and level of foreign language necessary for professional life (Ödemiş, Yüksel and Ünal, 2014). The most repeated reason why vocational high school students learn English in Taiwan is career development (Hau and Beverton, 2013). In addition, Warden and Lin (2000) examine the reasons and orientations of Taiwanese students’ towards English learning in a technology college and find out that students have strong instrumental motivation in their English studies, associated with career improvement. Therefore, students want to invest in their professional future by establishing a link between foreign language education in general and vocational English courses in particular and vocational education.

The second theme “content” involve six categories as “including professional terms/vocabulary”, “learning patterns in sentences”, “being an important lesson for the department”,

“not just giving importance to grammar”, “giving importance to grammar” and “organizing subjects from general to specific”. Similarly, in a qualitative study carried out by Özer and Yılmaz (2017) reveals that instructors of English who give vocational English courses, students who took the course and students who have not taken the course yet at a vocational college at a university think that the course content should be designed to be used in professional life, the content should give priority to dialogues/conversations and roleplays, it should develop vocabulary, materials appropriate to student interest and level of English should be used and it should include at least a little grammar. In his research, Al-Issa (2017) revealed that students expected from the content to include certain activities that combine learning, enjoyment, entertainment, fun, amusement, excitement and challenge at the same time. They also want to learn professional terms, pronunciation and grammar. Moreover, in another study, vocational high school students prefer job-oriented English rather than general English because they think vocational English will be more useful and helpful for them in the future. Besides, students state a desire to learn and comprehend technical terms related to their profession (Hau and Beverton, 2013).

The third theme “teaching-learning process” comprises of two subthemes as “expectations from the process” and “expectations from students”. The subtheme “expectations from the process” includes seven categories as “teaching based on speaking”, “teaching enjoyably”, “giving importance to pronunciation”, “giving importance to communication”, “making the course loved”, “offering more practice” and “not only teaching in English but also using Turkish.” Similarly, in another study, tourism undergraduate students emphasize the importance of speaking skill among four basic language skills during the course (Balci, 2016). A study carried out by Crosling and Ward (2002) reveals that companies underline the significant role of oral communication in the workplace and emphasize that university courses which focus on oral skills are regarded as appropriate. However, undergraduate students expect from their teachers to give four language skills equal attention, move beyond the prescribed textbook and supplement the syllabus through using different activities, materials and aids that would promote student-centeredness and help them purposefully practice the language and enjoy the lessons. In addition, they expect from their teacher to help them acquire certain important soft skills for the job market as it is the case with developing self-confidence, working in teams and collaboratively, solving problems and acquiring research skills (Al-Issa, 2017).

The subtheme “expectations from students” involves four categories as “giving importance to the course”, “revising subjects learnt in the course”, “reducing absenteeism” and “revising new vocabulary”. In parallel with this result, another study result emerges that the instructors think that if the students take responsibility for their learning, English course at vocational colleges at universities will provide students great benefits for their profession (Ödemiş, Yüksel and Ünal, 2014). English would become more significant for students if they notice the relationship between vocational English and their profession. If vocational English curriculum fits more closely to the real contexts, it will help students perceive that their English learning efforts are worthwhile. Furthermore, as Hutchinson and Waters (1987) express, if English course is relevant to learners’ needs, they will be more motivated to learn and will learn better and faster.

The last theme “assessment” is made up of four categories as “being successful in the course”, “tasks and assignments being based on dialogues/conversations”, “role-playing dialogues/conversations”, and “exams being not difficult”. In a similar vein, students state that English contributes a lot in amount to their success and total GPA because it is the most valuable course in credit at vocational college (Ödemiş, Yüksel and Ünal, 2014). In the light of these findings, it can be concluded that since Vocational English course is worth 10 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), the highest credit with six hours a week, students want to succeed in the course.

Conclusion

The aim of the research is to determine the expectations of the students studying at Faculty of Tourism from the Vocational English course. Qualitative research method, phenomenological design

and convenient sampling technique were used in the research. Data were analyzed by content analysis. The expectations of students from vocational English course were grouped under four main themes as objectives, content, teaching-learning process and assessment.

Students emphasize on objectives of the course because they generally want to develop themselves personally and because they want to get better positions in their professional life. The students study at Faculty of Tourism and having a good comprehension of at least a foreign language is crucial for their professional life. Thus, they are aware of the necessity. The students generally do their internship in hotels and restaurants so they realize the essentialness of English in their profession. Therefore, the instructors of English should determine the objectives of the course to meet the expectations of students.

Students stress on the content of the course because they want to learn the language in professional life. The instructors of English should design the curriculum in such a way that it will provide students learn and comprehend professional vocabulary, terms, and patterns in context. The subjects should be organized from general to specific. Speaking skill should be more important than grammar.

Students highlight teaching-learning process because most of them just learnt about grammatical rules of English language in their previous language classes and many of them get really bored of just memorizing the rules and filling in the blanks in the exams. The instructors of English should design the curriculum in such a way that it will provide students use the language in the classroom as if they were employees in tourism enterprises. The course should cover mainly pronunciation and communication, that is, speaking skill. The activities should be enjoyable so they can learn entertainingly. Students should role play dialogues and conversations in the classroom, which gives them the chance to practice. If necessary, the instructors may use native language to clarify the meaning or usage of some words or phrases. Students should often be informed about the necessity and advantages of speaking a foreign language in tourism sector. They should be encouraged to revise after school so that they can give more importance to the course. If they are involved in the course, they will not tend to be absent in classes.

Students underline assessment because they have six hours of Vocational English classes in their schedule. They want to be successful in the course and increase their total GPA. Tasks and assignments to be given to students may include preparing dialogues and conversations with or without clues. Process and formative assessment may be used to help students notice their lack and imperfection and improve themselves.

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