

The Assessment of Modular EFL Curriculum in PAU Prep Classes

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study is to determine the perceptions of students and instructors on modular teaching programme and its dimensions applied in PAU School of Foreign Languages. The sample size is 399 4th module prep class students, volunteer 11 instructors and second year students. The data has been gathered through mixed research methods. Median, Standard Deviation, such non parametric tests as Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis and thematic analysis are used to analyze the data. According to results, the students and instructors think that modular teaching curriculum is more productive compared to the traditional ones and should be applied in the following years after being revised. Moreover, it is found that there is not significant difference among the students' perceptions on modular teaching curriculum and its dimensions in terms of such variables as their gender and age. However, it can be said that engineering students and second year students have negative perceptions on assessment dimension of modular curriculum.*

Keywords: Modular teaching, Curriculum, Students, Instructors, Dimension

1. Introduction

In the 21 century, the rapid economic, social and technological changes resulted from globalization requires the radical changes in the field of education. It makes it easier for all nations to adapt a common language to keep up with these changes. Oğuz(2001:141) states that the integration effort leads all nations through a common language at the level of international relations, for this reason, teaching of foreign language becomes an important element not only in the educational programmes of the nations but also to detect the level of these programmes, especially inevitable for university students.

According to Karakuş (2013) the foreign language teaching is applied in every level of formal education from nursery to university education but the desired effective results are not provided. The English teaching in high schools becomes inefficient because of the fact that the prep classes in high schools were abolished and this process was spread into 4 years and the students do not give necessary care to English but the other lessons in order to enroll a university. The students can not get sufficient level of English when they graduate from high schools except from those who got an education in a few high schools giving adequate importance to language education. This situation means that the responsibility of language teaching is left to universities and it increases the importance of prep classes at universities.

Despite the importance attached to preparatory English programs in Turkey to bring university students up to an adequate level in terms of English and to help students use English internationally in various fields (Toker, 1999), the preparatory school programs have many problems as the universities dealing with such different problems as time, place, technology have to determine goals to train graduates who know foreign language and try different educational models in order to reach these goals more effectively and faster (Öztürk, 2014).

2. Literature Review

Module can be defined as "the meaningful small part of a whole." In education, it is a learning element which shows the desired learning goals in a behavioristic way, determines the necessary actions to achieve them, gives opportunity to control the level of reaching the goal, carrying the feature of being used effectively in teaching the individuals who are in different learning conditions, and has an integrity in itself (Aklan, 1989: 15). From this definition it can be said that module can give the individual a chance to learn by themselves.

Dubin ve Olshtain (1986), state that modular system is one of the most common methods used to design language teaching programmes. Modular education programmes are the ones which have been come forward in most of colleges in our country for foreign language teaching in addition to vocational and technical education (AÜHO, 2014; BÜYDÜ, 2014; DEÜYDÜ, 2014; GÜYDÜ, 2014; İEÜYDÜ, 2014; İSZÜDO, 2014; TEDÜ---İDO, 2014; TOBB ETÜ---YDB, 2014; YÜYDÜ, 2014). The modular language education programmes having been applied in some foundation universities and some private language schools for some time are now being adapted in public universities(Öztürk, 2014).

When the literature is searched, it is seen that the problem of foreign language teaching and learning in our country still exists and the scientific studies on the field are limited in terms of content and data sources. Also, the studies on modular systems in Turkey are mostly related to vocational and technical schools (www.yok.gov.tr). As this study is mainly focused on the perceptions of the output of the process, namely, students, and emerged from not only the students' perceptions but also those of teachers. it can be claimed that it will be a great source on the development of the modular education programmes in college prep classes in Turkey and lead and guide to the new studies.

In the light of information above, the purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of students and instructors on modular teaching programme and its dimensions applied in PAÜ School of Foreign Languages. For this purpose, four basic research questions were developed:

- 1) What is the contentment level of students on modular teaching curriculum applied in PAÜ School of Foreign Languages?
- 2) Is there a significant difference among the students' perceptions on modular teaching curriculum and its dimensions in terms of such variables as their gender, age, faculty, being first year or second year students and studying at different language levels?
- 3) What are instructors' perceptions related to the dimensions of modular EFL curriculum?
- 4) Compared to traditional teaching programme, what are the perceptions of second year students on modular teaching curriculum?

3. Method

Design

Mixed research methods are used to collect the data in this study. According to Creswell (2006) and Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) in mixed research, a current phenomenon is searched in its own environment with different data source; the data is collected through both Qualitative and quantitative research techniques, methods and approaches, then analysed and interpreted (Öztürk, 2014:117).

Sample

This study was conducted on 399 4th module prep class students attending at school of foreign languages in PAÜ during the spring term of academic year 2015-2016, 11 instructors and 10 second year students. The study sample was composed of 399 students elected randomly through "Simple Random Sampling" technique among 682 prep class students. In simple random sampling, the number of elements entering sample from each different elements of the field is determined completely by chance (Karasar, 2005: 113).

The volunteer 11 instructors selected by relevance sampling method and the ones who played an active role in the construction of modular curriculum selected by goal-oriented sampling method have also been included in the study. Also volunteer 10 second year students are included in the study to compare the previous and new teaching curriculum generally.

Data Tool

The Contentment Questionnaire the goal of which is to assess the influence of the programme on students was developed by a faculty member who had a PhD in the field of Educational Curriculum and since then it has been applied

each year tested in terms of validity and reliability. The value of Cronbach's Alpha was found by Öztürk as .92 (Öztürk, 2001:118).

The permission for the use of the questionnaire has been obtained from Mustafa Öztürk. Contentment Questionnaire uses a Likert-type scale (based on the responses: (1) never, (2) almost never (3) frequently and (4) always. The specialists around the field gave their opinions about the content validity and it is concluded that the instrument can measure the students' perceptions on modular system. For the construct validity The Pearson Correlation method is used to analyze whether each item in the instrument has the highest grade in the dimensions they belong to. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the 26-item version of the instrument's was 0,884. On the first page, information about questionnaire and demographic questions related with students were highlighted.

Structured interview questions are formed in order to get the opinions of both instructors and second year students on modular curriculum. The questions are prepared according to the basic research questions of the study, and structured especially for the instructors in coherence with the items in Contentment Questionnaire.

Analysis

The quantitative data have been analyzed through SPSS 22.00 package programme. In order to understand whether the sum points of the students' responses on Contentment questionnaire and its dimensions are different or not, one sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) was applied to the data and it was found that the variables do not show normal distribution. Thus, Mann – Whitney U, Kruskal – Wallis and Spearman Correlation non-parametrical tests have been used to analyze the sub problems of this study.

The qualitative data has been analysed through thematic analysis. Four steps have been followed during this process; familiarisation with the data and coding, determining the themes by collecting and analysing the codes, organizing and defining data according to codes and themes, interpreting the results relating the research questions (Şimşek and Yıldırım, 2008:237-238).

4. Results

The first problem of this study has been determined as "What is the contentment level of students on modular education programme applied in PAÜ School of Foreign Languages?" In order to answer this problem the frequency and average points and students' participation level to the statements derived from the answers of instructors to the Contentment Questionnaire have been determined in general. The table 1.1 related to this determination is given below.

Table 1.1.

Questions	Questionnaire					
	Never	Almost Never	Frequently	Always	Median	Standart Deviation
Question 1.	244	155	-	-	1,45	,498
Question 2.	33	82	215	69	2,80	,820
Question 3.	95	131	133	40	2,30	,942
Question 4.	84	156	123	36	2,28	,897
Question 5.	38	118	177	66	2,68	,861
Question 6.	24	57	194	124	3,05	,833
Question 7.	123	141	91	44	2,14	,980
Question 8.	70	132	158	39	2,42	,890
Question 9.	113	146	110	30	2,14	,917
Question 10.	78	143	150	28	2,32	,867
Question 11.	110	169	101	19	2,07	,846
Question 12.	55	113	178	53	2,57	,888
Question 13.	57	98	174	70	2,84	,932
Question 14.	154	153	71	21	1,98	,875
Question 15.	61	118	164	56	2,54	,915
Question 16.	26	94	189	90	2,86	,839
Question 17.	57	102	159	81	2,72	,958
Question 18.	67	96	164	72	2,60	,969
Question 19.	50	84	182	83	2,75	,926
Question 20.	41	50	170	138	3,02	,940
Question 21.	40	107	181	71	2,71	,874
Question 22.	63	95	159	82	2,65	,978
Question 23.	75	135	139	50	2,55	,933
Question 24.	52	103	164	80	2,68	,939
Question 25.	94	121	126	58	2,37	,999
Question 26.	86	177	100	36	2,28	,885
Sum	399				64,17	11,825

When Table 1 is being examined, it is possible to interpret the results as just like the following: 1.00-1.75 “Never”, 1.75-2.50 “Almost Never”, 2.51-3.25 “Frequently”, and 3.26-4.00 “Always”. The median value of the items of the questionnaire has been calculated as “2.52” which indicates that the students agree on the most of the items with by giving answers as “Frequently”.

The second problem of the study is indicated as “Is there a significant difference among the students’ perceptions on modular education programme an its dimensions in terms of such variables as their gender, age, faculty, and being normal or repeat students?” Mann – Whitney U test has been used to analyze the problem in terms of gender variable and the findings are shown in table 2 below.

Table 1.2: The results of Mann-Whitney U test showing the perceptions of the students on the modular system and its dimensions according to gender variable

Dimensions	Gender	N	Sum of Ranks	Mean Rank	U	Z	P
Curriculum	Male	205	39948,50	206,99	18530,00	-1,176	,240
	Female	193	39851,50	193,45			
Material	Male	205	37862,50	196,18	19141,50	-,643	,520
	Female	193	41937,50	203,58			
Teaching	Male	205	38843,50	201,26	19635,50	-,213	,831
	Female	193	40956,50	198,82			
Assesment	Male	205	37096,00	192,21	18375,000	-1,310	,190
	Female	193	42704,00	207,30			
Sum	Male	205	38195,50	197,90	19474,500	-,352	,725
	Female	193	41604,50	201,96			

$p > 0.05$

Table 1.2 shows whether the perceptions of the students on the modular system and its dimensions change according to gender variable or not. According to the results, it is found that there is no significant difference between male and

female instructors’ perceptions on the programme applied ($p > 0.05$).

The results of Kruskal-Wallis analysis performed to sort out whether the perceptions on modular system differ according to age variable or not are given in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: The results of Kruskal-Wallis test showing the perceptions of the students on modular system and its dimensions according to age variable

Dimensions	Age	N	Sum of Ranks	Mean Rank	U	Z	P
Curriculum	17-20	314	200,80	63050,00	13095,000	-,266	,790
	21-24	85	197,06	16750,00			
Material	17-20	314	202,79	63675,50	12469,500	-,932	,352
	21-24	85	189,70	16124,50			
Teaching	17-20	314	200,04	62811,50	13333,500	-,012	,990
	21-24	85	199,86	16988,50			
Assesment	17-20	314	198,85	62439,00	12984,000	-,384	,701
	21-24	85	204,25	17361,00			
Sum	17-20	314	200,65	63005,00	13140,000	-,217	,828
	21-24	85	197,59	16795,00			

$p > 0.05$

Table 1.3 shows whether the perceptions of the students on the modular system and its dimensions change according to age variable or not. According to the results, it is found that there is no significant difference between students' perceptions on the programme applied for age variable ($p > 0.05$).

The results of Kruskal –Wallis analysis conducted to examine whether the perceptions of the students on the

modular system and its dimensions change according to faculty variable or not revealed that students from different faculties have variable perceptions ($p < 0.05$) on the assesment dimension of modular system. In order to understand which group or groups show this difference, paired comparisons have been applied through Mann-Whitney U test. The results are given in Table. 1.4.

Table 1.4: The results of Kruskal Wallis test showing perceptions of the students on modular system and its dimensions according to faculty variable

Dimensions	Faculty	N	Mean Ranks	s.d.	X^2	P	Dif.
Curriculum	Eco and Adm. Sciences	303	204,07	2	4,175	,124	
	Engineering	83	179,69				
	Others	13	234,88				
Material	Eco and Adm. Sciences	303	202,13	2	,437	,804	
	Engineering	83	192,93				
	Others	13	195,54				
Teaching	Eco and Adm. Sciences	303	202,15	2	2,344	,310	
	Engineering	83	186,83				
	Others	13	233,96				
Assesment	Eco and Adm. Sciences(1)	303	206,07	2	8,484	,014*	1-2 2-3
	Engineering (2)	83	170,47				
	Others (3)	13	246,96				
Sum	Eco and Adm. Sciences	303	204,50	2	4,533	,104	
	Engineering	83	178,26				
	Others	13	233,81				

* $p < 0.05$

Table 1.4 show that there is no significant different perceptions of the students attending to different faculties for each dimensions of the modular system but assesment dimension. Namely, there is a difference between the perceptions of Eco and Adm. Sciences studentsand engineering students($U=10333,00$, $Z= -2,50$, $p < .05$) on assesment dimension. Also, in terms of assesment variable, it can be said that the students of engineering facultyand the

students of letter and science faculty and education faculty ($U=1568,50$, $Z= -1,25$, $p < .05$) have different perceptions. However, the lowest different perceptions belong to engineering students.

Table 1.5 shows whether the perceptions of the students on the modular system and its dimensions change according to first year and second year student variable or not.

Table 1.5: The results of Mann-Whitney U test showing the perceptions of the students on the modular system and its dimensions according to being first year and secondyear student variable

Dimensions	Students	N	Sum of Ranks	Mean Rank	U	Z	P
Curriculum	First Year	288	58960,50	204,72	14623,500	-1,323	,186
	Second Year	111	20839,50	187,74			
Material	First Year	288	59330,50	206,01	14253,500	-1,682	,092
	Second Year	111	20469,50	184,41			
Teaching	First Year	288	59324,00	205,99	14260,000	-1,681	,093
	Second Year	111	20476,00	184,47			
Assesment	First Year	288	59694,50	207,27	13889,500	-2,034	,042*
	Second Year	111	20105,50	181,13			
Sum	First Year	288	59794,00	207,62	13790,000	-2,126	,033*
	Second Year	111	20006,00	180,23			

* $p < 0.05$

At the end of the analysis, it is found that there is not a significant difference between first year students' and secondyear students' perceptions on curriculum, material and teaching dimensions of modular teaching curriculum but there is a meaningful difference between first year students and second year students on assesment dimension and the whole instrument ($p < 0.05$). When the average points are analyzed, it is clear thatfirst year students have more positive attitude towards the assesment dimension rather than second year students. Also in general it can be said that for that analysis, assesment dimension has much stronger effect on students' decisions and whole questionnaire.

Kruskal-Wallis test has been used to analyze the problem in terms of studying at different language levels variable. Also, in order to understand which group or groups show this difference, paired comparisions have been applied through Mann-Whitney U test. The findings are shown in table 1.6below.

Table 1.6: The results of Kruskal Wallis test showing perceptions of the students on modular system according to studying at different language levels variable

Dimensions	Level	N	Mean Ranks	s.d.	X ²	P	Dif.
Curriculum	A2	21	191,29	3	5,376	,146	-
	B1	131	190,89				
	B2	225	201,09				
	C1	22	251,43				
Material	A2	21	208,57	3	3,185	,364	-
	B1	131	205,54				
	B2	225	192,71				
	C1	22	233,39				
Teaching	A2	21	198,71	3	6,190	,103	-
	B1	131	186,77				
	B2	225	202,87				
	C1	22	250,66				
Assesment	A2	21	210,98	3	2,757	,431	-
	B1	131	191,70				
	B2	225	200,52				
	C1	22	233,61				
Sum	A2	21	202,40	3	4,425	,219	-
	B1	131	194,22				
	B2	225	198,31				
	C1	22	249,39				

$p \geq 0.05$

According to the results in Table 1.6, there is no significant difference between the perceptions of students at different

language levels on the modular programme applied ($p > 0.05$). Thus, it can be said that students having different lnguage levels have same point of views for the items on modular system and its variables.

Findings related to instructors' perceptions on modular curriculum and its dimensions

When the data gathered through the interviews with the instructors are examined, it is clear that they are satisfied with the modular curriculum. They indicate that the modular curriculum is fruitful in terms of teaching process. The students are motivated morefor the short-term goals. As the class performances is included in grading, the educational process becomes more flexible and student-centered. The modular system brings an approach providing active participation of the students although traditional system is much more applicable for the ones who can not go ahead between the modules easily.

In terms of metarials, they approve of the chosen materials. Flexibility in materials gives space the teacher in class but they face some problems in practice. The traditional curriculum was book-oriented but this system focuses on CEFR ,namely, the materials are more systematic. However, because of the lack of time, they can not use variable materials properly. Also, materials should be revised for students which will lead them for creativity and critical thinking. Last but not least, sometimes, students' levels go further although materials are at lower level. If they follow the materials, the exam questions prepared according to CEFR become difficult for the students.

In the field of testing and evaluation, when it is compared the traditional curriculum, the advantageous side of modular curriculum is that the number of the exams has increased and the avarege success of the students is assessed more accurately. However, in the exam preperation process, the instructors have faced some difficulties to find appropriate level questions due to CEFR criteria.

It is favourable that each skill is assessed seperately but for speaking and writing skills there should be more accurate rubric. Assigning portfolio is beneficial for students to learn and practise for themselves but in order to evaluate the portfolios properly, the number of the students per each teacher should be arranged.

Findings related to students' perceptions on modular curriculum and traditional curriculum

Overall, the students claim that the modular curriculum should be applied in following years because the modular system is more effective and encourage students to study. As the exams are applied frequently, students prefer studying regularly in order not to fail. However, in traditional curriculum, students procrastinate to study till the final exam given at the end of the year. Also, since the topics are divided into modules, learning and studying become easier and more systematic for students and it affects their performances positively in classes. Thus, the students feel themselves more secure as they take exams in terms of modules. When the issues are accumulated, the students get demotivated and distracted from the learning environment. Moreover, if students fail in module ending examination, they will have a chance to revise it in repeat classes. Finally, in each module students meet different teachers and teaching styles and it prevents them to get bored. Yet, sometimes it is difficult for the students to get accustomed to different teachers. Students also claim that in serious situations, 24-hour absenteeism may be inadequate as the medical report is not accepted.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study is to reveal students and instructors' perceptions about different dimensions of the modular program (i.e. curriculum, materials, teaching, assessment) implemented in PAÜ English preparatory school program aiming mainly to prepare students to follow their some departmental courses in English. According to Öztürk (2014: 123) although it was concluded in the previous program evaluating and foreign language teaching studies in higher education that the students did not meet their needs related to the target language, namely, they did not acquire the language entirely (Gerede, 2005; Gökdemir, 2005; Karataş ver Fer, 2009; Öztürk, 2013; Tunç, 2010), this study put forward that the curriculum applied in PAÜ prep classes takes students' needs into consideration seriously and provides both students' and instructors' satisfaction and pleasure.

The first problem of this study has been determined as "What is the contentment level of students on modular education programme applied in PAÜ School of Foreign Languages?" According to results, it is found that students are satisfied with modular teaching curriculum. They participate the items in the questionnaire at "frequently" level. This shows that they still think that the modular curriculum is a new phenomenon for them and they need time to get accustomed to it. Also, it can be concluded that there are some factors in the content and process of modular teaching curriculum that they are dissatisfied.

The second problem of the study is indicated as "Is there a significant difference among the students' perceptions on modular education programme and its dimensions in terms of such variables as their gender, age, faculty, and being first year or second year student?" According to results it is found that there is no different perception of the students on modular system and its dimensions in terms of gender and age variables. However, for faculty variable it is found that

students attending Eco and Adm. Sciences have different perceptions on modular programme than those of Eco and Adm. Sciences Letter and Science Faculty students. From this finding, it can be said that students of engineering faculty find it difficult to adopt the new curriculum. Also, this result can be explained by the fact that for most of the engineering students who have responded the questionnaire, prep class is not obligatory to pass to their faculties, namely, they prefer to study in prep class. In previous years, they follow traditional program and take the final exam at the end of the year and it contributes the grade 60%. Students find it easy to study before the final exam and pass the prep class. However, in modular teaching program, at the end of each 8 weeks, the students are assessed and they even fail or pass. As a result of this implementation, those students who follow the prep class optionally lose their motivation to learn English. Moreover, according to being first or second year student variable, the difference is found in assessment dimension. It means that second year students have negative perceptions on testing an evaluation process of modular teaching curriculum as they are familiar with the traditional assessment methods. Also, they are bored with having examinations for two years and hopeless at passing the prep class.

Furthermore, the instructors are in favour of modular teaching curriculum. They say that there are significant differences between the modular curriculum and the traditional one applied in previous years in PAÜ School of Foreign Languages. The division of educational year in four parts and the shift of the classes and instructors in each quarter make both students and teachers more dynamic and active. Also, absenteeism is limited in each module and this brings the discipline in classes. Moreover, they indicate that giving students chances to be able to pass upgrades and their faculties can be regarded as a motivating factor. However, they claim that it is beneficial that modular curriculum is in coherence with CEFR but it is sometimes under the expectation of both the students and faculties.

Instructors also touched on some of the chronic problems arising from the modular structure of the program affecting the teaching-learning process. From their perspective, repeating students with low motivation levels especially in the 4th module cause absenteeism problems. For some instructors, the modular system should be continued if these students are gained through new resources. Also, they indicate that especially in B1 and B2 modules the 8 week program is not sufficient and students do not internalize whatever they have learned. These problems affect the quality of the modular teaching curriculum.

Although they approve of the chosen materials which provide flexibility they admit that there are some problems in practice. For example more visual and audio materials should be integrated in class activities for students which will lead them for creativity and critical thinking. Moreover, they are satisfied with testing and evaluation methods; however, the number of the exams and time limitation sometimes cause them insufficient to prepare proficient questions.

The findings of this study show parallelism with those of Gömleksiz (2002) and Öztürk (2014) in their studies. According to these findings in general, the strong side of this teaching program is its being flexible, dynamic, gradual, process and result-oriented and minimizing students' absenteeism while attending the program. Resulting from these findings, it can be concluded that modular teaching curriculum is much more effective than the traditional teaching curriculum. The modular teaching curriculum influence the students positively in terms of language teaching.

The main goal of PAU prep classes is to provide students not only basic level English but also some academic language skills for their fields. It is not easy to acquire a fluent, native-like English in a very short time. Such factors as time devoted to teaching and also studying, the motivation of the students, the number of the students in classes and the demand of the faculties also affect the quality of language learning. If an appropriate curriculum which will ease students' adaptation is prepared and applied in prep classes, the success is inevitable.

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