

*Students' and Teachers' Perceptions on ESP Teaching and Students' Willingness to Communicate in English*

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**Abstract**

This study investigated how English language instruction in Vocational and Technical High Schools affected English use in practice, students' willingness to communicate, and their motivation to improve their English. For this purpose, to have a practical perspective on the issue, students who have attended the internship project and teachers who accompanied them are asked open-ended questions via online forms. Qualitative research and purposeful sampling are conducted. Students who attend vocational schools are often seen and stereotyped as non-achievers regarding school success. Hence, this study is crucial to determine whether this notion is correct. Especially, it is important to gain insight from students and teachers who have been abroad. Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools have a special method of English teaching, and it is termed as ESP (English for Specific Purposes). It is significant to find an answer to whether this special teaching method, which should be used in Vocational and Technical High Schools, has been implemented purposefully. Moreover, how effective this method is investigated. Results showed that both students' and teachers' perceptions on ESP teaching are affirmative; however, there are issues such as limited class hours, unsuitable coursebooks designed for ESP, and lack of authentic environment. Therefore, based on these issues, this study confirmed that ESP teaching in Burdur still has a long way to go unless these issues are fixed.

Keywords: Vocational High School, ESP, VHS, English for Specific Purposes, English Language Teaching

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## **Introduction**

Education in vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools has been a controversy considering its different nature. According to Yılmaz (2020), English education in Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools (VTAHS) in Türkiye has been a topic of interest in recent years, as the country looks to improve its language education in order to support the economic development and global competitiveness of its workforce. Unlike other schools, in vocational and Technical Anatolian high schools there are fields for different crafts such as: culinary arts, hair care and beauty, child development, electric-electronic technologies, machinery technologies.

### **1.a ESP (English for Specific Purposes)**

Although English education in VTAHS is significant because of their special education, the required attention to English education seems inadequate. The instructions have just concentrated on teaching English grammar and reading activities that do not include content relating to the students' vocational field (Mahbub, 2022). A suggestion would be to incorporate both general English and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) into this language program. Students require effective language usage skills for their future careers. Additionally, they also expressed a need to excel in their respective specialized fields, indicating the importance of incorporating ESP into the program (Aktaş & Doyran, 2017).

### **1.b ERASMUS+**

A twin school program, bilateral agreement or protocol, or international project can also grant students internships and skills training in overseas businesses (MoNE, 2018, p. 30). These aforementioned projects are granted by European Union. The program is called 'Erasmus+'. Thanks to this program high school students have a chance to go abroad. For vocational high schools Erasmus+ programs work differently. They offer a vocational education and training for VTAHS students. Unlike Anatolian high schools, VTAHS students have a chance to experience internship abroad. These internships are field specific, and they are arranged according to the project prepared for the related field.

### **1.c Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of the ESP approach on students' use of English, their willingness to communicate, and their motivation to improve their language skills. The study will examine the perceptions of both students and teachers who have participated in the Erasmus+ program, which offers students in VTAHS the opportunity for field-specific internships abroad. The study will investigate how this internship experience has changed students' perceptions of the English language and their motivation to improve their second language.

### **1.d Aim of the Study**

This research aims to identify how English language instruction in vocational schools has affected English use in practice, students' willingness to communicate, and their motivation to improve their English. For this purpose, students who have attended the internship project and teachers who accompanied them are asked open-ended questions.

Students who attend VTAHS are often stereotyped as non-starters when it comes to success. In Türkiye, students are placed in high schools based on the results of the High School Entrance Exam (LGS). Hence, this study is important to determine whether the notion is correct. Especially, it is important to gain insight from students and teachers who have been abroad.

When it comes to English teaching research in general, vocational schools are seems to be ignored. Thus, it is crucial to gain a deeper understanding of this topic and to identify what can be done further. It is significant to find an answer to whether the special teaching method, which should be used in vocational and Technical Anatolian high schools, implemented purposefully or not.

## **Conclusion**

This paper studied perceptions of students and teachers on ESP teaching for revealing the results open-ended questions are generated separately for both teachers and students. Additionally, this study unveiled the willingness to communicate of the students since the participants are chosen among the abroad apprenticeship projects.

According to the results, there are inevitable improvements in students' motivation towards English and teachers' views are partially approve these improvements. Furthermore, both teachers and students found apprenticeship beneficial. The research suggests that improving English education in vocational high schools in Türkiye may require a shift towards ESP programs and away from traditional methods of language instruction.

Teaching can be a valuable component of language instruction in vocational and Technical Anatolian high schools. Helping students develop the language skills they need to succeed in their future careers. By focusing on the specific language needs of students' future careers, ESP programs can help support the overall success and competitiveness of vocational high school graduates in Türkiye.

In this study, students and teachers are chosen among the ones who have been participated in apprenticeship program abroad purposefully. Yet even a chance of real-life communication and practice was not enough. Therefore, results of this study confirmed that ESP teaching in Burdur still has a long way to go. The present study has some limitations. There are three teacher participants since the participants are chosen from the project on abroad. Therefore, the sample could not be increased. Considering that the data was collected from only one high school, it is important to keep in mind that the findings cannot be generalized beyond the context of this study. This topic can be further delved into with a different context and larger sample.

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