PERCEPTIONS of METU FRESHMAN STUDENTS on ENGLISH PROFICIENCY EXAM (EPE)

SFL RESEARCH STUDY
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outline

• purpose & research questions
• instruments & method
• sample
• results
• conclusion
purpose

• to examine student perceptions and experiences regarding various aspects of METU-EPE
research questions

• What are the perceptions of freshman students about EPE in terms of
  ▫ difficulty level of components
  ▫ factors underlying their success and/or failure
  ▫ time allowed
  ▫ length of each component
  ▫ their belief in the validity of exam
• How do students prepare for EPE?

• Do freshman students experience problems in understanding the English-medium instruction in their departmental courses?
method and instrument
instrument: questionnaire (qualitative)

part A
demographic background

part B
8 questions in total
7 open-ended
content analysis method
1 five-point likert scale
means & deviations
method: purposeful sampling
participants (N=205)

94.6% attended DBE

58% male 42% female

60% MF, 26.3% EA score type
High school background

- Anadolu: 47.5%
- Öğretmen: 16.7%
- Devlet: 11.6%
- Fen: 12.1%
- Other: 9.6%
Level of Proficiency at DBE second term

- pre-intermediate: 36.6%
- intermediate: 31.1%
- upper intermediate: 25%
- advanced: 40.3%
results
### Perceived Level of Difficulty of the EPE Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty level of language use in EPE stage 1</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,18</td>
<td>0.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty level of reading comprehension EPE stage 1</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,46</td>
<td>0.915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty level of multiple choice listening EPE stage 2</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,14</td>
<td>0.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty level of listening-note-taking EPE stage 2</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,31</td>
<td>0.947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty level of short answer reading EPE stage 2</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,42</td>
<td>0.889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty level of paragraph writing EPE stage 2</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,39</td>
<td>0.919</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Success Rate of EPE takers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPE Score (out of 100)</th>
<th>% (N) of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59.5-65</td>
<td>47.3 (96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.5-70</td>
<td>24.1 (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.5-75</td>
<td>17.2 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.5-80</td>
<td>6.4 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.5-85</td>
<td>4.9 (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The two major ones are: **regular study** (43) and **goal-oriented study** (48). The former refers to doing homework regularly, attendance (some said attendance being compulsory at DBE was conducive to success).
• **regular study** (43): doing homework regularly, attendance, attendance being compulsory at DBE, listening to the instructor attentively, daily revision, etc.

• **goal-oriented study** (48). reading comprehension books, books specifically designed for proficiency tests, online listening exercises, SAC, summer school course and material, solving” multiple choice questions, “solving” previous EPE questions and “solving” reading.

• **diligence and commitment of DBE teachers**, (27) some naming them in gratitude and some claiming that teacher factor is crucial but based on luck

• **parallelism between EPE and DBE instruction**; similar exercises were being done in class (8) (inconsistent).
• **solid background** - 23 participants specified their high school background and strong foundation in English as being the sole factor

• **strength in a particular language skill/area**, i.e. “my grammar has always been good”

• **listening activities outside class** (17), having watched many movies and/or TV series, played computer games, and listened to songs in English (17)

• **extensive reading activities** (4) such as reading books or other texts of their own choice

• **their own interest in the language** and “good ear” for languages or their individual effort *only*

• **familiarity with/interest in the EPE topics** (17)
factors that lead to failure

(N=170)
pace of DBE instruction; the first term was too slow and the second was too busy.

1/ 4 holding themselves accountable (56)

1/ 4 holding EPE accountable (66)

holding mismatch between EPE and DBE instruction accountable (43)

pace of DBE instruction “the first term was too slow and the second was too busy”
time allowed: sufficient
length of each component
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>reading</th>
<th>listening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• enough no of Qs (68)</td>
<td>• enough no of Qs (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• texts too long / tiring (26)</td>
<td>• too many Qs (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• too few (10)</td>
<td>• component itself too long -- SS lose concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• problems related to accent of speaker and administration of test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
listening and note-taking:

• enough no of Qs (107)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language use</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• enough no of Qs (80)</td>
<td>• enough no of Qs (84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exceptional points of grammar or unnecessary details tested (10)</td>
<td>• Response (Part A) redundant, distracting, unfamiliar (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• too short / more questions (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
methods and sources used by test-takers
grammar and language use

- multiple choice Qs in grammar and/or reading books (43, 69)
- DBE & METU books (35)
- previous years Qs (16)
- summer school material (14)
- just attended (26)
- extensive reading (24)

listening

- TV-movies-series (50)
- self-study (37)
- SAC and other DBE facilities (37)
- only attended classes (21)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>writing</th>
<th>sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• self-study or individual study followed by instructor feedback (59)</td>
<td>• Cesur Öztürk’s books (55), Azar &amp; other books available on market (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• DBE instruction (27)</td>
<td>• DBE course books and class instruction (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Summer School material</td>
<td>• Worksheets, supplementary materials, Summer School materials (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• no study (16)</td>
<td>• books recommended by DBE and METU Publications books (39),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SAC (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Areas of difficulty experienced in departments
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Engineering</th>
<th>Arts &amp; Sciences</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Architecture</th>
<th>Economics &amp; Administrative Sciences</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Whether EPE measures students’ level of proficiency in English
(N= 198).

- partially  57.6%
- YES        20.7%
- NO         21.7%
Reasons for partial agreement or disagreement

• no speaking component in EPE
• little or no speaking practice at all at DBE (77 remarks)
Other remarks
Major areas of complaint

- Grammar is overemphasized.
- Instruction is not based on communication.
- Students’ performance throughout the year is undervalued.
- The difficulty level of EPE exams vary across years.
- DBE instruction and departmental needs are wide apart.
In conclusion...