

Perceptions of Students, Teachers and Graduates About Civil Aviation Cabin Services ESP Program: An Exploratory Study in Turkey

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Abstract English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a movement based on the proposition that language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning and language needs of particular groups of students. In Turkey, the growth of English is striking as it is cultivating students' English proficiency along with their English competence in specific areas to meet their future needs is given great importance. However, research done for ESP has been limited so far. The present study, therefore, aims to investigate the perceptions of Turkish ESP students, teachers and graduates regarding the English course designed for Aviation Cabin Crew Members. The data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and analyzed through pattern coding. The results revealed similar perceptions including the three groups of participants' expectations, experiences, challenges and respective solutions about the development of the existing ESP course which will serve as a reference in designing similar programs to facilitate learning English for specific disciplines.

Keywords Aviation · Cabin crew · Language needs · Learning needs · Course evaluation · ESP

1 Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a movement based on the proposition that language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning and language use needs of identified groups of students (Johns and Price-Machado 2001). The objectives

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and content of ESP courses are defined to meet specific needs of the learners (Hutchinson and Waters 1987). In Turkey, the growth of English is gaining importance emphasizing the English competence of the students to meet their identified needs. To achieve this purpose some state and private universities offer English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in the sophomore year.

Nevertheless, while recent research has mostly focused on English language teaching (ELT), little has been done for ESP. There have been few studies done on the teacher's role in ESP (Bracaj 2014; Ghafournia and Sabet 2014; Górska-Poręcka 2013), the challenges of teaching and learning ESP (Ahmed 2014; Saliu 2013), teachers' beliefs, attitudes and instructional practices in an ESP in-service teacher training program (Chostelidou et al. 2009; Rajabi et al. 2011; Savas 2009) and students' perceptions, needs and attitudes towards ESP (Arslan and Akbarov 2012; Martinović and Poljaković 2010).

The present study, therefore, aims to investigate the perceptions of Turkish ESP teachers, students and graduates by exploring their expectations, experiences, challenges as well as respective solutions about the existing program. Data collected from semi-structured interviews will shed a light on the experiences and challenges of Turkish teachers of English language and Turkish Civil Aviation Cabin Services students about an ESP course.

2 Literature Review

The globalized use of English requires speakers to be able to use special registers and expressions to meet situational needs (Chen 2014). In the workplaces all over the world, area-specific language competence is increasingly recognized as a marker of professional expertise, and references to specific language abilities are often seen in the professional competency statements of several professions. One of the effects of the growing importance of global English in professional contexts has been the rise of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching at all levels. ESP courses, such as English for Business and Economics, English for Science and Technology, English for Social Sciences and English for Aviation, are conducted to promote students' competence in English language in their own field of specialization, enhance their employability, and increase their opportunities for professional mobility (Belcher 2006; Marginson and McBurnie 2004).

Widdowson (1983) maintains that ESP focuses on training rather than education; it is intended to be used in specific vocational contexts, with the selection of appropriate content to develop English competence. According to Hyland (2002) "the use of systematic means to define the specific sets of skills, texts, linguistic forms, and communicative practices that a particular group of learners must acquire is central to ESP" (p. 392). In a similar fashion, Zhang (2011) states that a pedagogic approach to Business English includes the teaching of the strategic communication system in international business where participants follow business conventions and procedures,

and benefit from lexico-grammatical resources of English in addition to visual and audio semiotic resources to achieve their communicative goals.

Besides, regarding the language needs of graduates at workplace, Lehtonen (see chapter “[Practitioner Research as a Way of Understanding My Work: Making Sense of Graduates’ Language Use](#)” in this volume) highlights the need to learn vocabulary and specific work-related genres. In his study, one of the major challenges about ESP was related to the reports gathered from the students focusing on learning specific law-related vocabulary as well as their emphasis on *learning* ESP. While some students learnt using conscious metacognitive and/or cognitive strategies; others got more engaged in work tasks where the goal was not to learn language but to deliver a product.

With its focus on language in specific contexts, it is no surprise that genre has become a central concept within ESP research and pedagogy; analysing genres has helped researchers, teachers and learners go beyond intuitive understanding of the language for specific purposes (Swales 1990). As stated by Yayli and Canagarajah (see chapter “[The Processes Behind RA Introduction Writing Among Turkish Arts and Science Scholars](#)” in this volume), the concept of genre occupies an important place in language education. In their study, the two researchers concluded that the written texts of expert scholars should not only be examined but the time and effort to listen to their construction stories should be spent as well.

Furthermore, studies on teacher and student views on the ESP programs are few in number. Dovey (2006) argues that teachers are expected to address students’ needs as part of ensuring the transferability of ESP training to the workplace. Yet, one of the most distinctive features of most ESP contexts is that the teachers often have to deal with areas of knowledge with which they are not completely familiar. In other words, they struggle to master language and subject matter beyond the bounds of their previous experience. Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 158) describe ESP teachers as “reluctant dwellers in a strange and uncharted land”. According to Belcher (2006) for many ESP teachers this “land” is highly intimidating. Wu and Badger (2009) in a recent study with three teachers of maritime English in a college of China found that these ESP teachers responded to unpredicted situations in class where their subject knowledge was limited by using avoidance or risk taking. There is a general agreement in the literature that the ESP teacher requires additional training (Akermark 1983) in handling the materials related to the students’ field and extra effort and more experience than a teacher of General English.

In addition, Stewart believes that we need a fair amount of engagement with discipline areas so as to design an ESP course and implement it (see chapter “[Expanding Possibilities for ESP Practitioners Through Interdisciplinary Team Teaching](#)” in this volume). As the ESP practitioners have no advanced training, faking it or collaborating with a subject teacher are the options left. In other words, an arrangement for co-teaching is advised to minimize the complexity of ESP instruction (Stewart 2017). Similarly, Johns (1997) stated that teachers would benefit from collaborating with subject experts who can provide insights into the chosen topics or assist in the selection of texts and tasks.

Considering the ESP programs from teachers' and students' viewpoints, a study conducted by (Atay et al. 2010) attempted to find out the Turkish EFL students' and instructors' opinions about the engineering ESP program provided at a state university. To deal with content-based problems, all ESP teachers mentioned careful preparation before teaching, and reported using specific strategies while teaching, such as avoiding to answer students' engineering related questions unless they are certain, explicitly stating that their engineering related knowledge is limited, and consulting students in class for an answer or explanation. Students in general were satisfied with their textbook and the way their teachers carried out teaching and evaluation, and they preferred to have ESP courses throughout their engineering education.

Tsao et al. (2008) collected data from 354 students and 23 instructors in a selected technological university in Taiwan about their opinions and attitudes toward ESP course and ESP-related issues. The instrument used for the survey was a self-made questionnaire based on literature review. The results of this study revealed that students in general favoured ESP more than English for general purposes while teachers, in contrast, were more reserved about the idea of replacing general English education with ESP. Although both faculty and students recognized the importance of ESP, neither considered students' English proficiency up to the level needed to cope with the ESP course requirements. The two parties alike agreed that students needed to have a satisfactory grounding in Basic English skills before they advanced to ESP learning and that ESP instructors should possess English-teaching competency and subject content knowledge.

In another study conducted by Chiung-Wen (2014), the experiences of six teachers were explored regarding ESP instruction. Specifically, the study attempted to get a better understanding of disclosing and managing teaching challenges and dilemmas which ESP teachers perceived besides the nature of the required professional knowledge. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, one of which was a background interview with each teacher at the beginning of the semester. A semi-structured follow-up interview was carried out at the end of the semester. The findings revealed that the ESP teachers faced many problems and suggested a number of strategies as effective solutions such as examining teacher education programs to bridge the gaps between ESP instruction and classroom practices, mentoring beginning teachers and going into the conflicts of ESP teaching in pre-service education along potential resolutions.

A parallel study was carried out by Masoomah and Naghmeh (2015) analyzing the teachers' perceptions and practices of ESP instruction. A total of 20 teachers who were selected through convenience sampling from different English institutes participated in the study. A questionnaire with open-ended and close-ended questions developed by Alsolami (2014) was administered to the participating teachers. The encountered problems and the strategies were described. As a result, factors such as lack of field knowledge, lack of suitable training, lack of course materials and ESP resources were mentioned as challenges. Many teachers also indicated that an ESP teacher should collaborate with subject specialists and have a special training in this field (Estaji and Nazari 2015).

Based on these overviews, it is clear that the aim of teaching ESP is to develop the linguistic and professional skills of learners as well as their knowledge and competence in the relevant field. In order to determine and refine the content for the ESP course necessary language and skills should be identified (Basturkmen 2010; Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998) and the task of the curriculum designer is to mirror as accurately as possible the language, tasks and contexts of the target language situation. The present study, therefore, aims to evaluate an ESP program, namely Aviation English program, through collecting data from not only from teachers and students but also from graduates who are already employed. By doing so and by focusing on an area which has not been explored much so far, the study aims to contribute to current literature.

2.1 Aviation English

Aviation English is one of the subdivisions of ESP in which common language features and professionally regulated standards interact to define a restricted variety designated for use in routine aviation related contexts. The term encompasses a wide variety of language use situations; including the language of airline mechanize flight attendants and ground service personnel as well as more specialized communication between pilots and air traffic controllers (Farris et al. 2008).

Based on data from several accident reporting database, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has identified controllers and pilots inadequate L2 proficiency as a major challenge to effective controller- pilot communication (ICAO 2004, p. 1–1). As part of its role in promoting the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world, ICAO recommended the use of radiotelephony phraseology (known as RTF) to be used in communications between pilots and air traffic controllers in order to reduce the risk that a message will be misunderstood. ICAO introduced language proficiency requirements in the international aviation context in English, an L2 for many of the world's controllers and pilots. In non-routine situations and particularly emergencies that are not covered by the standard phraseology, pilots and ATC are expected to use “plain language” to tell the nature of the problem and work out how it can be resolved.

Since the 1970s, Aviation English has also encompassed the language of airport ground staff, cabin crew, passenger service agents, management and civil aviation authority staff and this led to the emergence of many ESP books such as *Ground English* (Hall 1976), *In-flight services* (Akiyama 1976) and *Airspeak: Radiotelephony communication for pilots* (Robertson 1987). Since 2008 the ICAO has required pilots and traffic controllers to take a test to prove their operational level four competence in English and this has brought about a new spate of books *Aviation English for ICAO compliance* (Emery and Roberts 2008).

The research base for Aviation English is still in its infancy. A small number of studies have reported on the design of Aviation English teaching materials. Bishop-Petty and Engel (2001) contacted air force personnel to identify potential topics.

Based on the topics suggested by the aviation personnel e.g. air turbulence, aerodynamics, formation flying and spatial disorientation, the researchers collected a wide range of reference sources for each topic to be used in ESP programs. Sullivan and Girginer (2002) investigated the language used by pilots and air traffic controllers. The study was conducted for an ESP program in a Civil Aviation School in Turkey and data included tape-recorded communication between pilots and air traffic controllers, and questionnaires and interviews with Turkish pilots and air traffic controllers. Information about how language was used was then used to inform the development of instructional materials Wang (2007) described the development of an Aviation English curriculum in China, focusing particularly on phonetic and semantic contrasts to teach students key pronunciation and vocabulary aspects of Aviation English.

Finally, although the testing of AE has attracted the attention of some researchers (Teasdale 1996); in the last years the focus has shifted to the new ICAO proficiency guidelines and to the design and validation of AE testing (Alderson 2009; Read and Knoch 2009).

3 Aviation in Turkey

In conjunction with the rapid growth of the country, and the deregulations in the aviation industry, Turkish civil aviation has shown a remarkable growth during the last decade. With the new investments in progress, both the aviation and the airport industries are expected to grow with an ever increasing pace in the upcoming decade. 49 airports are open to civil aviation and there is a huge market for the aviation industry in Turkey. The number of aircraft increased from 162 in 2003 to 489 in 2015 and the number of employees from 65,000 to 195,000 in 2014. Passenger traffic in Turkey has increased by 10.9% which is much higher than both the World average of 5.9% and Europe average of 5.7%.

When the origin and development of Civil Aviation sector in Turkey is considered, Government Airline Enterprise established by the government in 1933, currently named as Turkish Airlines (THY), succeeded to be the only company of Turkey to maintain air commerce until 1990. The company which started running with 5 aircrafts in 1933 gained its current name ‘Turkish Airlines’ in 1955. Having risen capital year by year, Turkish Airlines triggered the establishment of private airlines. Almost in 2000s since it was getting more and more difficult to meet the increasing demands, the country became privatized in all areas of aviation, and took necessary actions (Karatay et al. 2015).

Thus, the industry for both public and private airline companies requires pilots, air traffic controllers, cabin attendants, crew members, engineers and service staff to be able to use English. A good command of English, therefore, will enable them to communicate as with their counterparts in the world and serve their customers better on work related issues.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Setting

This qualitative case study was conducted in Civil Aviation Cabin Services Program of a private university in Istanbul, Turkey. This program lasting for 2 years requires university entrance exam for the enrolment and accepts around 100–120 students every year. The primary purpose of the program is to prepare students for domestic and international flights and enable them to reach B2 level English knowledge. Students are provided with practical education of the departmental courses in a mock-up classroom equipped with an aircraft model, galley, toilet, passenger seats, overhead lockers and seatbelts. The graduates of the program get jobs in airlines and become flight attendants/stewards.

Civil Aviation Cabin Services Program comprises of four academic terms in total. In the first term of Civil Aviation Cabin Services Program, students take departmental courses, e.g., Organization and Responsibilities at Aviation Companies, Aviation Terminology, Introduction to Civil Aviation, and Courtesy and Protocol Rules along with compulsory Turkish language and History of Turkish Republic courses. In the spring term of the freshman year, they have to take Basic safety rules, Basic Aeroplane Instruction, and Communication Skills as compulsory courses. In the third term of the program, they are responsible for five more compulsory courses. These are Medical Issues and First Aid, Basic Service Codes in Cabin, Emergency Safety Rules, Elocution and Announcement, Communication and Passenger Affairs. In the fourth term, aviation students take the courses of Crew Resource Management, Basic Airport and Flight Security, Hazardous Material Instruction, World Cultures, Interview Techniques and Personal Development. All of these courses, given in Turkish, aim at providing students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

There is no English preparatory program of the university for aviation students. The absence of English preparatory program necessitates more exposure to English in the freshman and sophomore years. Thus, freshman students take a 10 h-English course at the freshmen year. In the second year of the program, students have to take Aviation English course; the course is taught by four different ESP teachers 8 h a week. The ESP teachers all became volunteers to be appointed to this program while they were teaching at a preparatory school. Volunteer teachers participated in a 3 week-training held by Education Centre of Turkish Airlines. In this training, they were all guided on what English level is expected from flight attendant applicants and the sort of mistakes that can be tolerated. They also took guidance about the textbook to be used for Aviation English course. The ESP textbook called English for Cabin Crew (Gerighty and David 2011) is used. This textbook was selected in cooperation with Education Centre of Turkish Airlines.

As for assessment, the program students involved in the present study are supposed to take a mid-term exam for English course a couple of weeks after a quiz which is previously given. The quiz and mid-term exam show similarities in terms of the content, particularly in that they both include one reading part with open-ended,

true-false, headings-matching and sometimes multiple choice questions, one listening part generally with two different recordings, vocabulary part which is of filling in the blanks with the words or phrases in the box, matching words with their definitions, and completing the missing letters of a word or phrase. In addition to the parts above, grammar can be said to have the priority in bringing points to the aviation students because it covers 30–40% of the whole mid-term exam. Within the process between mid-term and final exam, they are supposed to submit one reading and one speaking project with a proportion of 10% each. At the end of the semester, they take a final test in which they are asked only multiple choice questions but still in all parts such as reading, listening, vocabulary and grammar. According to the goals and the objectives of this ESP program, writing skill is regarded as the least important for aviation students when compared to the other language skills.

In Aviation English course students are taught English which is commonly used within the cabin of an aircraft. They learn about aviation terminology belonging to cabin and vocabulary knowledge to be necessary for communication with foreign passengers particularly during serving food & drink or meeting these passengers' needs. Finally, they need to know how to make announcements in English and how to give instructions to be followed by foreign passengers during take-off and landing.

3.2 Participants

The present study was carried out with 50 aviation students, 3 English teachers and 6 graduates of the Civil Aviation Cabin Services Program. The age range of the current students is between 17 and 23 years old. They are all second year learners and competent about the use of basic structures in English language since they were already taught elementary and pre-intermediate level English when they were in their first year.

Besides, out of 6 graduates who participated in the study, three have been working for Turkish Airlines as cabin crew. They are females with an age range between 19 and 22 years old.

As for the 3 participating teachers of Aviation English, teacher 1 is female at the age of 25. She had started her career teaching English at culture and tourism vocational school for a year. After she had taught general English for 3 years at a preparatory school, she was appointed to Civil Aviation Cabin Services Program of Vocational School. Now she has been teaching ESP in this program for 3 months. Teacher 2 is again a female and she is 28 years old. She has 6 years of teaching experience. Her first 3 years of teaching were the at a preparatory school and for the last 3 years, she has been teaching both Aviation and General English at Civil Aviation Cabin Services Program. Finally, the last participant of this study (teacher 3) is a 25 year old female teacher. She has been teaching English for 2 years. She started teaching at preparatory school and after a year she continued her career at

Civil Aviation Cabin Services Program. Currently, she is teaching Aviation English and General English at the same time.

4 Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

A qualitative case study was used as a research design in this study to find out the perceptions of the English teachers, current students and graduates about the English course designed for Aviation Cabin Crew Members. The three groups of participants were selected from a single program at the university where the research was conducted. Data were gathered over the course of approximately 2 months by means of semi-structured interviews including open-ended questions (see Appendices A, B and C).

To begin with, the Aviation students were asked about their expectations from the course followed by their overall evaluation of the teachers and materials used in the course. Then, they were requested to briefly share their ideas about their course involvement and competencies in Aviation English. Finally, they were asked to state the challenges they experience as well as provide solutions for the improvement of the existing program.

Furthermore, the ESP teachers were proposed parallel questions. First, they were asked to comment on their competencies and roles as ESP teachers in the Aviation course. Next, they expressed their feelings about teaching Aviation English as well as differentiated between teaching ESP and general English. Finally, they shared their challenges and suggested respective solutions about the program.

Finally, the graduate students were asked whether the Aviation program has met their needs regarding their career as cabin crew members. They also stated how competent they feel using Aviation English as well as how active they use Aviation English in their career.

4.1 Data Analysis

In this qualitative study, data gathered from the semi-structured interviews was analysed through pattern coding (Miles and Huberman 1994). First of all, answers for open-ended questions were categorized into similar groups. Then, these categories were put into coding process and main themes determined by participants were listed. As for the next step, voice records of interviews were converted into transcripts as text data. After reading the texts, the same process of open-ended questions was repeated and the main themes were conceptualized and lastly, given a code. Once the codes were identified, they were compared and contrasted as well as grouped under specific labels. Finally, the categories were compared to one another and the related “themes” were introduced.

After the data analysis of the interviews and observations, a deeper analysis took place while writing up the manuscript. The two researchers associated the main themes with the research questions with an attempt to sought answers and evidence from the data. The repeating ideas created the main themes giving way to theoretical constructs. To identify the degree of interrater reliability, two experts in the field of qualitative data analysis identified the themes from the codes. It emerged that the raters achieved .83 close agreements on the general themes apart from the verbalizations of similar concepts.

4.2 Results

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the experiences of Turkish ESP students, teachers and graduates by exploring their experiences along with the difficulties they face within the existing program designed for Turkish Civil Aviation Cabin Services. The following part reports the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews which were conducted to the ESP teachers, existing students and graduates of the Civil Aviation Cabin Services Program.

4.3 Perceptions of Students About Aviation English

To begin with, when the students were asked about their expectations from the existing program, all of them explicitly stated that they would like to be fluent and accurate while talking to the passengers during the flight. Specifically, they would like to learn phrases and words related to aviation as illustrated in the following three excerpts:

[...] I would like to learn how to express myself clearly while talking to the passengers during the flight. (Student 1, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] I think we need to learn specific words and phrases about aviation to be able to talk to the passengers during the flight. (Student 2, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] I expect to learn more about Aviation English. I would like to learn specific words about Aviation, understand the passengers and help during the flight. (Student 3, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

In addition, the participating students said that the Aviation program should focus both on theory and practice. In other words, they should not just learn the specific terms about Aviation but also receive interaction on how to use them in context. Considering this point, two of the students said:

[...] In the program, we should both learn the aviation terms as well as how to use them while talking to the passengers and/or other crew members at the international airport. (Student 4, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] The Aviation English should provide us with the specific terms related to our future career as well as engage us in practice where we can use the language effectively. (Student 5, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

Furthermore, the students were asked to assess the ESP teachers and materials used in the Aviation English course. Their responses showed that the students were positive about their teachers as they were quite experienced and competent about teaching aviation English as illustrated in these samples:

[...] Our teachers are very experienced about Aviation English. They teach us the specific terms and help us to improve our English about cabin services. (Student 5, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] We learn a lot from our teachers. They are experienced and try their best to help us improve our English in Aviation. (Student 6, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

However, the ESP students were not very happy with the materials used in the existing program. They said that rather than handouts, more interactive activities such as role plays should be integrated in the course which would provide them with the opportunity to use the language in the Aviation context as shown below:

[...] In the course, teachers generally give us handouts. We need more practice where we can use Aviation English. I think role play is a good idea! (Student 7, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] We fill in the handouts in the course. We need more interaction where we can actively use Aviation English. (Student 7, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

Besides, the participating students were asked about their involvement in self-assessment. More specifically, they were requested to make comments whether they were involved in any self-assessment and if they did, how this process worked. As shown in these excerpts, the Aviation students generally prepared word cards and tried to guess their meaning or take online quizzes to assess their language development:

[...] I love learning vocabulary about aviation. I prepare small word cards and try to guess their meaning. (Student 8, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] I try to practice English at home. I find some online quizzes and try to solve them to improve my English. (Student 9, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

The participating students were also asked how competent they felt about Aviation English. The gathered answers revealed that the students were not much competent in Aviation vocabulary and needed more practice where they can use these specific terms in related contexts. Considering this issue, three of the students said:

[...] I am weak at aviation vocabulary. Although I try to memorize these words, I still don't know how to use them. I think we need learn about how to use these words in context. (Student 10, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] In my opinion, vocabulary is very important for our future career. We need to learn words about cabin crew services and also use them in context. (Student 10, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview).

[...] After the course, I try to memorize the new words. However, I cannot use them in a sentence or dialogue. We need more practice about using these specific terms in context. (Student 11, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

Regarding the challenges they experience in the program and what respective solutions can be suggested for the improvement of the program. Majority of the students said that they would like some visitors from the cabin crew services to come to their classes and share their experiences as displayed in the following excerpts:

[...] I think, I would be a good idea if cabin crew members visit our classes and share their experiences. (Student 11, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] Apart from the books and handouts, it would be a good idea to bring some visitors such as pilots or flight attendants to our classes and we can listen to their real life experiences. (Student 12, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

Finally, additional to the suggestion about the visiting hours with cabin crew members, some of the students stated that they should be more engaged in roles plays and debates as shown below:

[...] We can do role plays and practice the language of cabin crew members together. (Student 13, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] It would be a good idea to do debates about different aviation topics. We can discuss what is appropriate to say when and why as a group. (Student 14, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

4.4 Perceptions of Teachers About Aviation English

Apart from the aviation students, the three ESP teachers were asked to share their opinions about the program. First, when asked about their competencies and roles as ESP teachers, they said that one of their primary goals is provide students with the language they need for aviation and provide them with a classroom atmosphere where they could feel comfortable with the target language as illustrated in the following comment:

[...] I try to create a positive classroom environment where students can learn about aviation English and feel comfortable while using the target language. (Teacher 1, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

In addition, the participating teachers were asked how prepared they feel to teach aviation English as well as in what ways they learn to teach the content. All three teachers said that they spend some time for preparation at home before they come to the class. They search for specific terminology and expressions as well as try to

provide students with various examples on the given topic. Considering this issue, two of the teachers said:

[...] Before each lesson, I try to prepare at home looking for some specific terms and expressions from the Internet. I try to give students as many examples as possible related to the topic. (Teacher 2, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] I prepare for the lesson every day. I look for the specific terms on the Internet and write down many examples to share with students during the class. (Teacher 3, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

Furthermore, the aviation teachers were asked in what ways they think that teaching general English is different from aviation English. All participants stated that teaching ESP is more related to teaching specific vocabulary rather than focusing on grammar. They also said that teaching ESP has a specific focus which is related to meeting the needs of the students. In the Aviation course, teachers try to help students improve their Aviation English and use it effectively once they become cabin crew members. The following excerpts justify these findings:

[...] I think that teaching ESP is more related to teaching specific vocabulary. We try to teach terms about Aviation rather than focusing only on grammar. (Teacher 1, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] In the ESP course, we try to meet the needs of our students. They need to learn about Aviation English once they graduate and become cabin crew members. That's why, we have a specific focus. (Teacher 2, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

Furthermore, the ESP teachers were asked about the challenges they experience in the program as well as what respective solutions they can suggest for the improvement of the exiting program.

As for the challenges, teachers emphasized the extra time they spend to prepare before they teach the class. They also complained about the lack of motivation and students' unwillingness to participate in the course. Considering these challenges, the teachers said:

[...] I need to spend much time preparing for the course at home. I try to find as many examples as possible before teaching the new subject to my students. (Teacher 3, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] Most of the students are demotivated. They feel bored easily and refuse to participate in the lesson (Teacher 1, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

Finally, for the solutions to these problems, the participating teachers made a couple of suggestions. They believed that extracurricular activities such as field trips and engaging students in more practice such as role plays and debates would make the program more interesting as well as increase the motivation and participation of the students.

[...] I think that we can add some field trips. This will be more interesting and motivating for our students. (Teacher 2, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] We definitely need more practice rather than just theory in our courses. If we engage our students in role plays and debates, they will be willing to participate and have more fun. (Teacher 3, 23rd Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

4.5 Perceptions of Graduates About Aviation English

As the last participating group in this study, 6 graduate students were asked whether the Aviation program has met their needs, how active they use Aviation English and how competent they feel using Aviation English in their career.

First, the graduates said that the program has met their needs not only in raising their awareness on specific terms and expressions about Aviation, but also helped them to use Aviation English with the cabin crew members and passengers during the flight as illustrated below:

[...] The program did not just help me to learn terms and expressions about aviation, but also helped me to actively use the language while talking to the cabin crew members and flight passengers. (Graduate student 1, 27th Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] In this program, I have learned how to use the Aviation terms and expression effectively. I can use them actively while talking to the cabin crew members and flight passengers. (Graduate student 2, 27th Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

Finally, the graduate Aviation students stated that after they had completed the program, they feel competent using the language both in their daily lives as well as in their career. Considering this issue, two of the graduates said:

[...] After I had completed the program, I feel confident using Aviation English in my every day communication as well as during the flights. (Graduate student 3, 27th Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

[...] As a graduate of this program, I feel competent while talking to the cabin crew members, passengers and daily conversations (Graduate student 4, 27th Nov., 2016, Semi-structured interview)

5 Discussion

The aim of this study was to evaluate the Aviation English program based on the perceptions of the current students, teachers and graduates. The data collected from the interviews revealed that all three participating groups had similar perceptions including their expectations, experiences, challenges and respective solutions about the development of the existing ESP course.

To begin with, students stated that they expected the program to emphasize both theory and practices. They said that they need to be fluent and accurate enough in Aviation English so that they can use the language effectively both in their career

and everyday life. As Zhang (2011) suggests, the teaching of the strategic communication system is a pedagogic approach to ESP which requires participants to follow conventions and procedures in the relevant field benefit from lexico-grammatical resources of English so that they can achieve their communicative goals. The participating students also believed that their teachers were competent and experienced in Aviation English, yet they felt they needed to be engaged more in activities such as role plays and debates which would provide them with the opportunity to use specific terms and expressions about Aviation more effectively.

In addition, the Aviation students tried to practice English on their own preparing word cards, guessing their meaning as well as taking online courses. This shows the importance of self-assessment in the Aviation English program. Finally, the students asked for class visits to be made by cabin crew members which would help them to hear different experiences and learn more about Aviation.

Besides, the teachers of the Aviation English program stated that they tried to create a positive learning environment where students can feel comfortable while learning and using the target language. They spend extra time at home preparing for the course searching for specific samples on the related topic. In this way, they try to meet the needs of the students which are different from general English as they have to learn specific terms and expressions about Aviation rather than just grammar. Many felt they needed more collaboration with subject specialists and maybe have a special training in this field (Estaji and Nazari 2015). Teachers also believed that students could enjoy the courses some extracurricular activities as well as more interactive activities are integrated in the program.

Finally, the graduates of Aviation English stated that the program helped them improve their knowledge on specific terms and expressions as well as their speaking skills. They said that they could actively use the language both in their daily lives and their career.

Based on these findings, it is clear that students studying in such programs (e.g. Aviation English) have specific language needs that need to be closely addressed. Therefore, as suggested by Dovey (2006), these needs should be taken into consideration while designing the program focusing on the student motivation and active involvement. In other words, such program should be student-centred and should draw on the learners' professional engagement with the subject matter of the course (Hyland 2002). The long-term involvement of students with their specialized domain as well as their hopes to work in specific fields, will give ESP programs a clear instrumental value and will serve basis for the development of new program.

6 Conclusion

So far a good deal of research has investigated the perceptions of ESP students or teachers regarding the English course designed for Aviation Context. However, this research has been too limited to provide considerable information about the experiences of Turkish ESP teachers, existing students and graduates of Civil Aviation

Cabin Services Program by exploring their experiences as well as the challenges they faced within the program. The inquiry into purpose has been crucial to us. In this paper, we have discussed what participants find the hardest and what they suggest as a solution about Aviation English Course. The conduction of the research in only one setting and the administration of the semi-structured interviews to very few ESP teachers and graduates are the limitations of our study.

We hope that this study will help, in the future, ESP teachers get a clear understanding of their students' expectations and needs in an Aviation English course; and how to tackle the difficulties they face via a number of suggestions. In this regard, to provide required professional knowledge for ESP teachers, pre-service or in-service teacher education programs to be designed in accordance with the findings obtained from our study would be supporting. The analyses could also be guidance to prospective doctorate studies on Aviation Vocational Schools. It is supposed that it would assist similar institutions and programs with Aviation English course to develop requirements-driven materials and to enhance their curriculum within the related program so that more graduates of Civil Aviation Cabin Services Programs worldwide can be fully employed.

Appendices

Appendix A. Student Semi-structured Interviews

- (a) What are the expectations of the students about the Aviation English program?
- (b) How do the students evaluate the ESP teachers and materials used in the Aviation English course?
- (c) Are they involved in any self-assessment? If yes, how? If not, why?
- (d) Do you feel yourselves competent in Aviation English? If yes, if what aspects? If not, why?
- (e) What are the challenges they experience in the program? What respective solutions can be suggested?

Appendix B. Teacher Student Semi-structured Interviews

- (a) How do the teachers evaluate their competencies and roles as ESP teachers in the Aviation English program?
- (b) How prepared do the teachers feel to teach Aviation English? In what ways do they learn to teach the content?
- (c) In what aspects do the teachers think general English and Aviation English differ from one another?
- (d) What are the challenges they experience in the program? What respective solutions can be suggested?

Appendix C. Graduate Student Semi-structured Interviews

- (a) Has the Aviation English course met your needs? If yes, in what aspects? If no, why?
- (b) How active do you use Aviation English? In what contexts do you use it? Briefly explain.
- (c) How competent do you feel using Aviation English? Briefly explain.

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