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## A content analysis of graduate research on English preparatory programs at universities<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This study examines master's and doctoral theses on English preparatory classes at tertiary level in Turkey in terms of completion year, thesis type, subject areas, data types, research design, sample groups, problem statements and recommendations. This study is a systematic review of literature and the data was collected through document analysis technique. Content analysis was carried out on the theses selected through criterion sampling method. A total of 82 theses, which were completed by July 2017, were included in the analysis based on inclusion criteria. The analysis reveals significant results as to theses on English preparatory classes at universities. The most frequent subject areas in the theses were identified as learning styles/strategies, motivation/attitude/belief, program evaluation, increasing vocabulary knowledge, reading skills and foreign language anxiety respectively. The majority of the theses rest on quantitative data and employ descriptive research designs. Samples in the theses mostly consist of students while few of them address instructors. The most frequent themes in problem statements include inadequacy, importance and failure while the most frequent recommendations are about motivation and anxiety, and in-service training. This study has the potential to guide future research by putting forth research trends in graduate research on English preparatory classes at tertiary level.

**Keywords:** English preparatory classes; graduate research; theses; content analysis.

### 1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language has many benefits such as being open towards the innovations and improvements, being able to follow publications and news by media tools and travelling to foreign countries more easily as well as getting a better job, a higher salary and social status (Oktay, 2015). Due to these reasons, people across the world invest their efforts to learn a foreign language. As for Turkey, learning and teaching practices regarding foreign language mostly rest on English. In fact, foreign language has been synonymous with English in Turkey for more than half a century (Özmen, Cephe & Kınık, 2016). The fact that English is the most prestigious foreign language in Turkey stems from the policies of governments in Turkey to spread and enhance learning and

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teaching of English (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban, 2012). Therefore, teaching of English is practiced in all levels of education in Turkey as a required subject, both in private and state Institutes.

Alptekin & Tatar (2011) argue that Turkish people's exposure to Western languages dates back to 18<sup>th</sup> century and substantive reforms took place in foreign language teaching and learning with the foundation of Republic of Turkey. They also suggest that sending tertiary-level students to Western countries, foundation of education colleges (Anatolian high schools) with dual language instruction, English-medium state and private universities, parallel English medium programs in Turkish medium universities, development of English as a lingua franca and financial incentives offered by private and public sectors in Turkey for employees with a satisfactory level of English have all paved the way for the predominance of English in Turkey. In addition, English serves as an instrument for political, economic and cultural relations with the West (İnal, Özdemir, Kıray & Oral, 2016).

Despite the given dominance and significance of English in Turkey, the quality of foreign language education is highly discussed, criticized and researched (Cesur, 2008; Demir, 2012; Evcim, 2008; Kılıç, 1992). Oktay (2015, p.584) lines up the problems in foreign language teaching and learning which are: (1) Turkey's policy in foreign language teaching is not sufficient enough, (2) foreign language courses are generally called "teacher-centered", (3) too much emphasis is given in grammar, (4) students are not spending enough time for language learning, (5) classes are too crowded, (6) language teaching is not starting early enough and environment for language teaching is not sufficient enough, (7) there is not enough practice, (8) no questions are asked in the university entrance exams in a foreign language, (9) students motivation to learn the language is not enough, (10) homework is not helpful with the language learning and students' active participation in foreign language courses is insufficient.

In addition to elementary and secondary schooling, higher education Institutes in Turkey provide English language education because of the ineffective education in former levels. Most of the language education provided in elementary and secondary schools at a low proficiency level is expected to result in merely 'educational learning' which only leads to the increase of knowledge but students cannot use this knowledge to interact and participate in the new language (Atar, 2014, p.20) Preparatory classes, schools of foreign languages and departments of foreign languages affiliated to rectorates serve for this need (Özkanal, 2009). Particularly preparatory classes for teaching English are common in tertiary levels. Procedures and principles for the functioning of these classes have continuously been changed and the final arrangement was carried out by Council of Higher Education with a regulation published in the official gazette in 2016.

This regulation holds that there are two types of preparatory foreign language classes, which are mandatory classes and optional classes. The former addresses the students in the departments which, fully or partially, offer education in English medium. The latter offers foreign language education for students in departments with Turkish medium language. Students in mandatory classes who cannot be successful in two years do not have the right to continue their education. Students in optional classes can move on to their departments even if they are unsuccessful in language education.

The widespread teaching of English and over 50 departments of English language teaching and linguistics in Turkish universities have increased the academic research on this issue (Yağız, Aydın & Akdemir, 2016). Besides, reasons such as the incongruence between policy objectives and instructional practices (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban, 2012), the need for competent English instructors in universities (Özmen, Cephe & Kınık, 2016) and the inefficiency in gaining the necessary language skills at the targeted levels till the end of higher education (Oktay, 2015) have concentrated research on preparatory English classes. Issues addressed in these studies include duration, nature and medium of instruction, curriculum planning, course book teaching, material design and assessment (İnal et al., 2016).

In order to integrate academic studies to see their mutual contributions, there is a need in examining and comparing research studies periodically (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005; Selçuk,

Palancı, Kandemir & Dündar, 2014). These synthesizing studies, in any field, may focus on articles (Solak, 2014; Yağız, Aydın & Akdemir, 2016), theses (Adıgüzel & Ergünay, 2012; İnal et al., 2016; Özmen, Cephe & Kınık, 2016) or studies in certain journals (Eğmir, Erdem & Koçyiğit, 2017) though some studies also examine articles, proceedings and theses (Alptekin & Tatar, 2011). With respect to ELT and applied linguistics, research trends in articles and theses are examined by researchers around the world (Motha, 2009; Woravut, 2012). In spite of this, there are a few review studies in Turkish context that deal with the research trends in the field of English language learning and teaching. Despite the considerable number of research studies in this field, systematic review of them are quite rare in Turkish scientific context (Solak, 2014; Yağız, Aydın & Akdemir, 2016) Accordingly, more studies in specific fields of ELT are needed to be reviewed to get a mutual conclusion from the studies carried out independently and guidance for future research. The review studies on teaching and learning of English are explained below.

Graduate research on teaching and learning of English in Turkey was examined by Özmen, Cephe & Kınık (2016) and İnal et al. (2016). Özmen, Cephe & Kınık (2016) examined 137 doctoral research studies on English language teaching in Turkey between 2010 and 2014. The major subject areas of the 137 theses are teaching English as a foreign language, foreign language teacher education and second language acquisition. Teaching English as a foreign language theme included the sub-areas of language skills, language components, curricular studies, testing, learner and teacher variables, document analysis & language use, world Englishes, technology, young learners, intercultural communication, multiple intelligences, and other issues, foreign language teacher education theme included sub-areas of preservice teacher education and in-service training, and second language acquisition theme included sub-areas of acquisition of morphosyntax, acquisition of lexemes, error analysis and focus on form. İnal et al. (2016) reviewed doctoral research on English language teaching and learning between 2009 and 2013 at Turkish universities. They categorized the 25 theses into four groups according to their research focus: (1) instructional variables and designs, (2) learners, (3) textbooks, (4) program development and evaluation.

In addition to graduate research, articles on teaching and learning of English in Turkish context were examined by Solak (2014) and Yağız, Aydın & Akdemir (2016). Solak (2014) examined 189 research papers on foreign language teaching in Turkish context published between 2009-2013 in SSCI and Ulakbim databases. The variables were year, authors, language of the paper, journal index, topic of the paper, research design, data collection tools, sample, sample size and data analysis method. The most frequently studied topics were found to be teaching, learning, concept analysis, educational technology, teacher training, attitudes, curriculum studies, development and adaptation of scales and tests, development of teaching materials and other topics. Yağız, Aydın & Akdemir (2016) examined 274 research articles published in Turkey between 2005 and 2015 in the field of English language teaching and learning as a foreign language. They found out that language learning and teaching is the most common focus in the studies and quantitative research designs with descriptive tools and analysis procedures are preferred more.

Finally, Alptekin & Tatar (2011) reviewed nearly 130 articles, conference proceedings and doctoral theses on applied linguistics and foreign language education for the period of 2005-2009 in Turkey. The main areas of the studies were foreign language teaching and teachers, foreign language learning and learners, foreign language teacher education, the four language skills, measurement and evaluation, and the relationship between language and culture.

These review studies are on teaching and learning English as a foreign language in general. İnal et al (2016) and Özmen, Cephe & Kınık's (2016) studies are on graduate research while Solak (2014) and Yağız, Aydın & Akdemir's (2016) studies are on articles. Besides, Alptekin & Tatar's study is on articles, conference proceedings and graduate research. They yield rich data as to ELT field. For instance, they reveal that the research on ELT mostly focus on teaching and learning, learner characteristics, four language skills, teacher training, evaluation, textbooks/materials, curriculum development and educational technology. Though these review studies point to the general trends in ELT field, studies analyzing more specific sectors of ELT are also needed as they

would provide concrete conclusions and recommendations about that sector. There aren't any studies reviewing the research on English preparatory classes at tertiary level, which account for the majority of foreign language teaching in universities.

Given the significance of preparatory English classes in universities in Turkey, the number of students attending these classes and the accumulation of research studies particularly theses on these classes require an in-depth review. In addition, the above-cited review studies are limited to short time spans of research as they include the whole field. Analyzing specific factors of a field within a long-time span would provide the longitudinal trends. The first graduate research on English preparatory classes was finished in 1992. This analysis may help researchers see the research trends in English preparatory classes at tertiary level and help them base their future research on these findings. Therefore, this study aims to carry out an analysis of master's and doctoral theses on English preparatory classes at universities in Turkey.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyse the master's and doctoral theses about English preparatory classes at tertiary level in Turkey in terms of thesis type and thus put forth research trends to guide future research.

### 2.1. Research Questions

**RQ1:** What is the distribution of theses in terms of thesis type and year?

**RQ2:** What is the distribution of theses in terms of the subject areas of the studies?

**RQ3:** What is the distribution of theses in terms of data types?

**RQ4:** What is the distribution of theses in terms of research design?

**RQ5:** What is the distribution of theses in terms of participants?

**RQ6:** What is the distribution of theses in terms of problem statements?

**RQ7:** What is the distribution of theses in terms of recommendations?

## 3. Method

This study is a systematic review of the literature. The data was collected through document analysis technique. Document analysis includes analysis of written documents such as official publications, reports, records, open ended answers to surveys (Patton, 2002), which is dissertation in this study. Content analysis was carried out on the data obtained. In content analysis, it is aimed to describe the characteristics of a document by counting occurrences of themes, words or phrases within the documents (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p.58). The theses were grouped under themes of subject areas according to their titles, keywords and the topics studied. While coding and categorising the data, constant comparison technique was used for consistency. All the theses analysed in this study can be accessed online from the thesis centre of the Higher Education Council ([tez.yok.gov.tr](http://tez.yok.gov.tr)), which is worth mentioning for the sake of the validity of the study.

### 3.1. Sample

A total of 82 theses<sup>4</sup> comprise the sample of this study, which were selected through criterion sampling method. In the sampling process, some inclusion criteria were used. The sample was obtained from the thesis centre of the Higher Education Council using the keywords “preparatory class (hazırlık sınıfı)” and “preparatory programme (hazırlık programı)”. After the search was completed, the analyses were carried on the theses which were open to access by the authors. Theses about the prep classes of other languages than English; theses about prep classes in secondary education; and theses about different preparatory programmes (e.g. marriage preparatory courses and so on) were excluded. As of July 2017, there were 82 theses compatible with the inclusion criteria which were taken as the sample of this study.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. The type and year of theses

Of the theses, 69 (84.1%) were master’s theses and 13 (15.9%) were doctoral theses. The distribution of the theses with respect to completion year can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of theses in terms of year

<i>Year</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
1992	1	1,2
1994	1	1,2
1996	1	1,2
1998	1	1,2
1999	1	1,2
2001	1	1,2
2004	4	4,9
2005	1	1,2
2006	2	2,4
2007	3	3,7
2008	8	9,8
2009	4	4,9
2010	5	6,1
2011	8	9,8
2012	9	11
2013	7	8,5
2014	8	9,8
2015	6	7,3
2016	7	8,5
2017	4	4,9
Total	82	100,0

<sup>4</sup> Akpur, 2015; Alıcı, 2004; Altaş, 2012; Altınır, 2008; Arın, 2010; Ataman, 2017; Ateş Özdemir, 2014; Aydemir, 2011; Aydemir, 2013; Aydın, 1998; Ayhan, 2014; Balabakgil, 2016; Balcı, 2017; Balkul, 2010; Baylan, 2007; Bayram, 2011; Bora, 2013; Cengizhan, 2016; Cesur, 2008; Cincioğlu, 2012; Çekirdek, 2014; Çelik, 2015; Çetinkaya, 2017; Çevikbaş, 2016; Dağlıoğlu, 2004; Daylan, 2001; Demir, 2012; Demirkol, 2009; Derince, 2016; Doğan, 2016; Efe, 1996; Erakman, 2015; Erarslan, 2011; Erkol, 2011; Ertan, 2008; Evcim, 2008; Felek Başaran, 2011; Gülsoy, 2011; Gültekin Çakar, 2009; Gündüz, 2015; Güneş, 2004; Güntürkün, 2007; Gürata, 2008; Hiçyılmaz, 2006; İleri, 2013; Kar, 2014; Karabey, 2011; Karabıyık, 2008; Karagöl, 2015; Karakılıç, 2014; Kaya, 2014; Keşmer, 2007; Kılıç, 1992; Koçer, 2012; Korkmaz, 2014; Köse, 2012; Mede, 2012; Oğuz, 2017; Ok, 2005; Önkuzu, 2013; Özaydınlı, 1994; Özdoğru, 2008; Özkanal, 2009; Özkardeş, 2011; Öztürk, 2010; Padem, 2002; Pulat, 2010; Sarar, 2008; Sakrak, 2009; Şanlı, 2016; Şen, 2012; Tatış, 2010; Temir, 2015; Toker, 1999; Tokuç, 2014; Uludağ, 2013; Uzun, 2013; Yalçın, 2016; Yıldız, 2013; Yılmaz, 2004; Yılmaz Yakışık, 2012; Yördem, 2016

It can be seen from Table 1 that the highest number of theses was completed in the period of 2011-2014. The year 2008 stands out exceptionally out of this period with a number of eight studies. It can be inferred that the studies about preparatory classes at universities in Turkey started to boom in the year 2008 with an exceptional decline in the year 2009. In July 2017, there were already four theses which is an indicator of the interest continuing about the topic.

#### 4.2. Subject areas of theses

The theses about the preparatory classes in Turkey were grouped under themes of subject areas according to the topic they focused on, the titles of the theses and keywords of their abstracts. The distribution of theses with respect to subject areas is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Subject areas of theses

<i>Subject areas</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Learning styles/strategies	10	12,2
Motivation/attitude/belief	8	9,8
Program evaluation	7	8,5
Increasing vocabulary knowledge	5	6,1
Reading skills	5	6,1
Foreign language anxiety	5	6,1
Needs analysis	4	4,9
CALL	3	3,7
Meta-cognitive strategies	3	3,7
Writing skills	3	3,7
Grammar mistakes	2	2,4
Listening comprehension skills	2	2,4
Opinions	2	2,4
Speaking skills	2	2,4
Native, non-native teacher	2	2,4
Causal attributions	2	2,4
Student autonomy	2	2,4
Curriculum design/evaluation	2	2,4
Use of mother tongue	1	1,2
Course book review	1	1,2
Course book adaptation	1	1,2
Language competence and alignment to university	1	1,2
Critical literacy	1	1,2
Blended learning	1	1,2
Integration of the target culture to classroom	1	1,2
Achievement of English	1	1,2
Syllabus design	1	1,2
Attitudes towards homework	1	1,2
Student burnout	1	1,2
Problems in assessment	1	1,2
Performance management system	1	1,2
Total	82	100



As Table 2 reveals, 82 theses were grouped under 32 themes of subject areas ranging from learning styles to performance management systems. The most studied three subject areas were learning styles/strategies ( $f=10$ , 12.2%), motivation/attitude/belief ( $f=8$ , 9.8%) and program evaluation ( $f=7$ , 8.5%) while only one thesis each was completed in 14 themes.

#### 4.3. The types of data in theses

The distribution of the theses according to the types of the data collected is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of theses in terms of the data types

<i>Data types</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Quantitative	56	68,3
Mixed	19	23,2
Qualitative	7	8,5
Total	82	100,0

It is observed in Table 3 that the majority of the theses collected quantitative data ( $f=56$ , 68.3%). 19 of the theses collected mixed data (23.2%) and in seven theses qualitative data were collected (8.5%).

#### 4.4. The research designs of theses

The theses were grouped according to the research design employed. The distribution of the theses in this respect can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of theses in terms of research design

<i>Research design</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Descriptive	65	79,3
Quasi-experimental	16	19,5
Causal comparison	1	1,2
Total	82	100,0

Most of the studies ( $f=65$  76.8%) used a descriptive research design. 16 of the theses are quasi-experimental (19.5%), 2 are curriculum development studies (2.4%) and one (1.2%) is a causal comparative study.

#### 4.5. The participants in the theses

In the theses about English preparatory classes, a total of 19.044 students and 792 academics comprised the samples. The distribution of the theses with respect to the sample groups addressed can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of theses in terms of sample groups

<i>Sample</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Student	53	64,6
Student/instructor	23	28,0
Instructor	6	7,3
Total	82	100

53 of the theses (64.6%) have samples consisting of students, 23 of the studies have mixed samples of students and instructors together (28%), and 6 of the studies have samples consisting of instructors alone (7.3%).

#### 4.6. Problem statements in the theses

In all the 82 studies, 156 problems were stated, 118 of which could be grouped under 7 meaningful themes and 28 sub-themes. The remaining problems were grouped under the category of others. Table 6 lists the themes of problems.

Table 6. Problem statements of theses

<i>Themes</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>f</i>
Inadequacy	38	of research about the topic studied	16
		of teaching vocabulary	6
		of the curriculum	3
		of motivation	3
		other issues	10
Importance	33	of teaching English	6
		of individual differences	5
		of teaching learning process	5
		of motivation-attitude	4
		of affective characteristics	3
		of thinking strategies	2
		of other issues	8
Ineffectiveness / failure	18	General failure in language teaching	12
		Failure in exams	3
		Other issues	3
Needs	11	Of students	8
		Various needs	3
Skills	8	Writing skill	1
		Reading skill	1
		Speaking skill	2
		Listening skill	1
		Other skills	2
		Four skills	1
Problems	6	About curriculum	2
		Of students	3
		Of instructors	1
Unawareness about an issue	4	About students	3
		About instructors	1
Other	38		

The most frequent theme of problem statements is inadequacy which consists of statements about inadequacies of research about the topic studied in the literature, teaching vocabulary, curriculum, motivation and other specific issues that could not be categorized. Following inadequacy, the next frequently studied theme is importance. The problem statements in the theses included expressions as to the importance of teaching English, individual differences, teaching-learning process, motivation-attitude and so on. The third theme is ineffectiveness or failures which are about general failure in language teaching or failure in exams. The fourth theme is about the needs which are mostly about students. Skill theme includes issues about four skills collectively or writing, reading, speaking and listening skills individually. The next theme involves problems as to curriculum, students and instructors. Lastly, four theses justified the topic as a result of a lack of knowledge or unawareness about the issue and thereby to obtain information about it.



#### 4.7. Recommendations of the theses

In 82 theses analysed, there were 275 recommendations excluding implications for further research. The categories of recommendations are provided in Table 7.

Table 7. Recommendations of theses

<i>Subject</i>	<i>f</i>
Regarding motivation and anxiety	21
In-service training, new courses, briefing	20
About skills	15
About curriculum	13
About ESP	13
About giving more importance to various issues	11
About course/activity books	11
Regarding raising awareness	7
Use of L1	7
Regarding communicative teaching	5
Interests, needs, individual differences	3
Other (couldn't be categorized)	149

There are various recommendations about various specified subjects and practices and there are ones containing general statements or ones about more than one matter at a time. The recommendations were grouped under categories according to the issues they address and 126 of them were grouped under 11 categories (see table 7). The rest includes individual recommendations in a wide range of issues. The most frequent recommendations are on motivation and anxiety, in-service training, new courses and briefing while the least frequent ones are on interests, needs and individual differences as well as specific recommendations in the category of other.

#### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

With the aim of carrying out a content analysis on graduate theses about English preparatory classes at universities in Turkey, this study examined 82 master's and doctoral theses in terms of thesis type and year, subject areas, data type, research design, sample groups, problem statements and recommendations. It was identified in the analysis that 69 master's (84.1%) and 13 doctoral (15.9%) theses were completed and were accessible by July 2017. This high number of graduate research indicates the academic interest in English preparatory classes at tertiary level in Turkey. When the completion years of the theses are analysed, it is seen that the period of 2011-2014 accommodates condensation of theses with the highest rate of 11% in 2012 and the number of theses continues to increase at a high rate, as well. This finding is in parallel with articles on ELT, too. Solak (2014) found out that the highest number of articles on ELT was published in 2013 in the period of 2009-2013 and Yağız, Aydın & Akdemir (2016) report that the highest number of articles were published in 2013, 2011 and 2014 respectively between 2005 and 2015.

The subject areas of 82 theses were grouped and the most frequent themes were identified as learning styles/strategies, motivation/attitude/belief, program evaluation, increasing vocabulary knowledge, reading skills and foreign language anxiety respectively. Similar review studies in the literature grouped research in terms of themes or subject areas in broad categories. For instance, Özmen, Cephe & Kınık (2016) reviewed doctoral theses on ELT between 2010 and 2014 and found out that the subject areas of theses were teaching English as a foreign language, foreign language teacher education and second language acquisition. The most frequent sub-areas included pre-service teacher education, learner and teacher variables, and language skills respectively. Solak (2014) reviewed articles on foreign language teaching from 2009 to 2013 and found out that the

most frequently studied topics include teaching, learning and concept analysis. Furthermore, Yağız, Aydın & Akdemir (2016) list the most frequently subjects of articles on ELT published between 2005 and 2015 as language learning & acquisition, language teaching and teacher education respectively. When the categories in this study are considered in a broader manner, it can be suggested that the themes of theses on English preparatory classes at tertiary level are in the same fashion with theses and articles on ELT.

It was identified in the analysis that the majority of the theses rest on quantitative data (68.3%). Mixed data (23.2%) and qualitative data (8.5%) follow it. Besides, more than three-quarters of the theses employed a descriptive research design. The dominance of quantitative methods and data in theses on English preparatory classes at tertiary level coincides with other theses and articles on ELT. İnal et al. (2016) found out that doctoral ELT research from 2009 to 2013 mostly employed quantitative research design. Similarly, Solak (2014) identified that nearly half of the articles on foreign language education from 2009 to 2013 employed quantitative research designs (48.7%) while this ratio is 33.9% for qualitative methods and 17.5% for mixed methods. While 71.1 % of articles on ELT published between 2005-2015 employed quantitative methods, only 13.5% used mixed methods and 9.5% used qualitative methods (Yağız, Aydın & Akdemir, 2016). However, Özmen, Cephe & Kınık (2016) identified that, of the doctoral ELT theses between 2010 and 2014, 71% used mixed methods, 24% used quantitative methods while only 5% used qualitative methods. The high ratio of mixed methods is an interesting finding; however, they also reported that studies with mixed method mostly relied on quantitative data. The findings of this study and other review studies on ELT reveal that there is need for studies with more qualitative data to get a richer understanding of the issues in the field.

Most of the theses on English preparatory classes at tertiary level in Turkey (64.6%) have samples consisting of students while few studies have samples consisting of instructors alone (7.3%). This case is also valid for articles. Solak (2014) found out in his review of articles on foreign language education from 2009 to 2013 that while mostly students from elementary to post graduate level constitute the samples in papers, teachers/instructors make up only 8.5%. Similarly, the ratio of teachers and academics in the samples of articles on ELT published between 2005-2015 is 21% (Yağız, Aydın & Akdemir, 2016). These findings unearth the need to address the experiences of instructors who are one of the most important stakeholders in foreign language learning and teaching process.

The problem statements which form the bases for the studies and give out the motives of the researchers, indeed, show so much similarities or contiguities that 118 of the total 156 could be grouped under seven categories. Inadequacy, ineffectiveness and importance are the most recurring motives for the study. A total of 275 recommendations were made in the theses, 20 of which are about in-service training or putting new courses in faculty curricula for teacher education. Two issues come forth as a result of these recommendations. The first is, all the training programmes or new courses would have their own needs of resources, curriculum, planning and books and would have their own problems similar to the ones of ELT or preparatory classes. It sounds like a solution causing new similar problems; however, none of the recommendations included any idea in terms of this aspect. The second twister is caused by the questions of how, where and when the recommended courses or training programmes can be applied, who the teachers would be and which resources would be used.

To conclude, this study analysed masters' and doctoral theses on English preparatory classes at tertiary level in Turkey and reached significant findings as to the subject areas of the studies, data type, research design, sample groups, problem statements and recommendations. English preparatory classes are an important part of foreign language learning and teaching experiences. Such that, 26% of the doctoral ELT theses between 2010-2014 are about English preparatory programs of the universities (Özmen, Cephe & Kınık, 2016) and there is a need for more research. However, the future studies should be guided based on the previous studies. This study serves for this need and provides a general picture of the literature of graduate research on English

preparatory classes of universities by putting forth the research trends in the field. While determining new subject areas for research and designing studies, this study could be taken into consideration to prevent repetition.

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