Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi

Hacettepe University Journal of Education

e-ISSN: 2536-4758

Teknik Bilimler Meslek Yüksekokullarındaki Zorunlu İngilizce Derslerine Yönelik SWOT Analizi*

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Makale Bilgisi	ÖZET
Geliş Tarihi: 30.03.2020	Bu çalışmanın amacı, Teknik Bilimler Meslek Yüksekokulunda (TBMYO) verilen İngilizce derslerinin güçlü ve zayıf yönleri ile sunduğu fırsatlar ve içerdiği tehditlerin öğrenci, öğretim elemanı ve yönetici görüşleri çerçevesinde incelenmesidir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda yürütülen çalışmada, karma yöntem desenlerinden biri olan yakınsayan paralel desen kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın nicel boyutunu, İç Anadolu bölgesindeki bir devlet üniversitesinin TBMYO'sunda İngilizce -I ve II derslerini tamamlamış, uygun örnekleme yoluyla belirlenen 313 ikinci sınıf öğrencisi oluştururken, nitel boyutunu aynı üniversitenin TBMYO'sunda görev yapan ölçüt örnekleme yoluyla belirlenen yedi akademisyen oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen anket aracılığıyla elde edilen veriler sayısallaştırılarak betimsel analiz ile bireysel görüşme formları aracılığıyla elde edilen nitel veriler ise içerik analizi ile çözümlenmiştir. Bulgularda, İngilizce derslerinin güçlü yönü olarak öğretim elemanlarının mesleki bilgi ve becerileri öne çıkarken; öğrenme-öğretme süreci, derslik koşulları, dört temel dil becerisi, yabancı kaynaklara erişim, ilgisiz/isteksiz öğrenci profili zayıf yönler olarak belirtilmiştir. İngilizce derslerinin fırsatları olarak zorunlu İngilizce dersleri ile sunulan İngilizce öğrenmenin mesleki açıdan gerekliliği ön planda iken; tehditlere yönelik olarak Erasmus gibi yurtdışı değişim programlarına başvuru imkânının TBMYO'lara sunulmaması sıklıkla vurgulanmıştır. Zayıf yönlerin geliştirilmesi ve tehditlerin ortadan kaldırılmasına yönelik olarak YÖK, Üniversite, MYO yönetimi ve öğrenme-öğretme sürecine ilişkin çözüm önerileri sunulmuştur.
Kabul Tarihi: 04.02.2021	
Erken Görünüm Tarihi: 14.03.2021	
Basım Tarihi: 31.10.2022	
	Anahtar Sözcükler: Teknik bilimler meslek yüksekokulu, İngilizce dersi, SWOT analizi, paydaş görüşleri

A SWOT Analysis of the Compulsory English Courses in Vocational Technical Colleges

Article Information	ABSTRACT
Received: 30.03.2020	The aim of this study was to investigate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of compulsory English courses in Vocational Technical Colleges according to perspectives of students, English instructors, and principals. For this aim, convergent parallel design was used in the study. Through convenience sampling, the quantitative study group consisted of 313 second grade students who completed English I and II in the college in a state university in Central Anatolia. The qualitative study group consisted of seven academicians selected through criterion sampling and worked at the same college. The quantitative data collected via the questionnaire developed by researches were analyzed by descriptive statistics, and the qualitative data collected via semi-structured interview schedules were analyzed by content analysis. According to findings, English instructors' pedagogical content knowledge and skills were highlighted as strengths but as weaknesses teaching-learning process, classroom conditions, four basic language skills, access to foreign resources, and demotivated student profile were stated. While the importance of English in professional life was frequently-emphasized opportunity; Vo-Tech College students' ineligibility to apply Erasmus-like mobility programs was emphasized as threat. To improve weaknesses and eliminate threats, the participants offered various solutions in relation to Higher Education Council, University, Vo-Tech College Administration and teaching-learning process.
Accepted: 04.02.2021	
Online First: 14.03.2021	
Published: 31.10.2022	
	Keywords: Vocational technical college, English course, SWOT analysis, stakeholders' opinions

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the lingua franca of the 21st century, English has been used by many people all over the world. The spread and domination of English has been a long history, especially after the Second World War, English became the dominant language in the fields of politics, science, art, media and education (Crystal, 2003). English as a global language is spoken by about 1.7 billion people around the world (British Council, 2015) and the number of communities speaking English as a second or foreign language is gradually increasing. Apart from the native language, teaching English has gained utmost importance for many countries in order to meet the increasing local, national, and international demands. Indeed, English as a foreign language is considered as one of the most vital and in-demand skills to correspond to the current social, economic, scientific, and technological developments and changes (British Council, 2015; Kara, Ayaz & Dündar, 2017). Therefore, English language proficiency is not only essential credential for professional life but also provides personal and social outcomes (Curtain, 1990; Oktay, 2015). Considering the fact that English as a foreign language increasingly becomes the most dominant medium in each aspects of communication, the status of teaching-learning English has been elevated in terms of school subjects, age level, weekly hours, etc., in many countries around the world. For instance, English is taught as a compulsory course in preschool education in almost all European Union countries (Eurostat, 2017). However, English language proficiency at higher education might be considered as door-opener role in students' future professional carrier, facilitating international collaboration and cooperation, following the latest developments in the specialized area, etc. In other words, proficiency at English language is needed in higher education in order to carry out scientific research processes effectively and to gain the requirements of professional life (British Council, 2015). Moreover, teaching-learning English in higher education provides opportunities for students to gain cultural awareness and become global citizens as well (Maringe & Foskett, 2012).

In Turkey, learning English as a foreign language has been acknowledged as one of the focal skills of higher education intuitions in which various practices such as compulsory English courses, vocational English courses, preparatory classes, use of English as a medium of instruction, etc. have been carried out to increase the quality of English education. According to the Regulation on Foreign Language Education in Higher Education (article 5, Official Gazette, 2016), the main purpose of foreign language education for the higher education students is "to teach the basic rules of the foreign language taught, to develop foreign language vocabulary, to understand what is read and hear in foreign language and to express him/herself orally". Among the Turkish higher education institutions, the official language of instruction at such leading universities as Middle East Technical University, Boğaziçi University, Bilkent University, is English. There are also Turkish-medium universities at which some faculties and/or programs are delivered in English completely or partially. For instance, the undergraduate Medical Education program at Hacettepe University is delivered completely in English. Yıldız Technical University, the medium of instruction in such programs as Civil Engineering and Mechanical Engineering is partially (30%) English and preparatory class is compulsory (Center for Measurement, Selection and Placement (CMSP), 2016). There are also some undergraduate programs in which English-I and English-II courses are compulsory for two semesters in different undergraduate programs, like Primary School Teaching at Gazi University, Computer Engineering at Kocaeli University.

Considering associate's degree programs, the importance of foreign language education is also emphasized in the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey and one of the Level 5 (Associate's) Qualifications is stated as "to monitor the developments in the field and communicate with peers by using a foreign language at least at a level of European Language Portfolio A2 General Level" (Higher Education Council [HEC], 2010). In line with this statement, compulsory English courses are one of the core academic and vocational subjects of the Vocational Colleges (VOCs) that provide two-year associate's degree programs to meet the need for qualified intermediate staff in different professions and business areas arising from the scientific and technological advances (Alkan, Suiçmez, Aydınkal & Şahin, 2014). Although types, class hours, credits may differ according to programs and universities, almost all of the VOCs in Turkey take the mission of foreign language education into consideration. For instance, in the Bologna information package, one of key learning outcomes of the Computer Programming at Ege University VOC, it is stated that "being able to read and understand technical documents written in the mother tongue and foreign languages ... and to communicate written and orally by using mother tongue and foreign language at the required level by this field" (Ege VOC, 2021, para.15). Another example taken from the Bologna program outcomes of Ankara University Gama VOC is "They use a foreign language at the level of European Language Portfolio A2." (Gama VOC, 2021, para.15). In addition, English courses for specific purposes (such as vocational English) are given in VOCs. Considering Vocational Technical (Vo-tech) Colleges in Turkey, English-I and English-II are compulsory courses in the first academic year. Although the importance of teaching-learning English is an indisputable fact to be considered seriously in almost all VOCs and Vo-tech Colleges in Turkey, English course differs in terms of goals/qualifications, objectives, content, teaching-learning activities, and measurement-evaluation process. For instance, when compared to English course of Selçuk University and of Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University Vo-Tech Colleges, as stated in Bologna course information packages, differentiation in each aspect is obvious (Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University Vo-Tech Colleges' Bologna course information packages, 2021; Selçuk University Vo-Tech Colleges' Bologna course information packages, 2021).

Despite the given priority to teaching English as a foreign language in higher education institutions various problems reported in the literature as follows: lack of communication skills in English (Bedük, Eşmen & Ay, 2016; Davras & Bulgan, 2015; Karakuş, 2013), failure to adapt English teaching-learning process according to students' interests and needs (Güllü, 2007; Ödemiş, 2018; Şimşek, 2014), teacher-centered instruction (Şimşek, 2014); limited use of instructional materials (Marwan, 2017; Ödemiş, 2018; Şimşek, 2014); insufficient professional knowledge of faculty members (Marwan, 2017); students'

anxiety level (Chang, 2016; Mutlu, 2013) or lack of self-confidence (Turhan, 2009); insufficient language skills of writing (Chang, 2016), speaking (Şimşek, 2014), and listening (Şimşek, 2014); insufficiency of students' previous learning (Çelik, 2013; Parlak, 2011) and the lack of diversity in teaching methods and techniques (Parlak, 2011). Furthermore, the studies on English course curriculum implemented in VOCs are very limited in number and most of them were focused on the one aspect of curriculum, namely either course contents or instructional methods and techniques used by instructors. According to the results of these studies, English curriculum of VOCs is dominated with the course contents (Yıldırım & Güroy, 2016), the list of the topics is too general, incomprehensive, and the use of various teaching methods and techniques is rare (Bedük, Eşmen & Ay; 2016; Deperlioğlu, Köse & Güraksın, 2016; Özdemir, Öztekin & Özdemir, 2016). Considering the research on teaching English as a foreign language at Vo-Tech Colleges, the focus of the present study, there is no research conducted in Turkey; yet there is a quite limited number of studies conducted abroad (Chang, 2016; Choosri & Intharaksa, 2014).

Based on the above-mentioned issues, it is obvious that although teaching English as a foreign languages in higher education has been regulated and different practices are implemented to eliminate problems due to different factors; both VOCs and Vo-Tech Colleges are seem to be more flexible in terms of English course curricula when compared to four-year undergraduate programs. Indeed, there is neither common English curriculum nor national framework for English courses offered at VOCs and Vo-Tech Colleges. Therefore, the investigation of the current status of the compulsory English course given at Vo-Tech Colleges in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats through different stakeholders' perspectives might shed light on the factors that influence the quality of teaching English Vo-Tech Colleges and might provide evidence-based scientific data for curriculum development studies in future. In this respect, SWOT analysis is one of the well-known frameworks to explore current situation of organizations, programs, institutions, etc. in terms of internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) (Özan, Polat, Gündüzalp & Yaraş, 2015). The results of SWOT analysis might provide valuable suggestions for the strategic planning of institutions for future improvement agenda (Behdioğlu & Duran, 2016).

1.1. Purpose and Significance of the Research

The aim of this study is to investigate the current status of the compulsory English course given at the Vo-Tech College in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats through the perceptions of the students, English instructors, and principals. For this purpose, the present study is mainly sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the compulsory English course given at the Vo-Tech College according to students, English instructors, and principals?
2. What are the opportunities and threats of the compulsory English course given at the Vo-Tech College according to students, English instructors, and principals?
3. What do students, English instructors, and principals suggest to improve/eliminate weaknesses and threats of the compulsory English course given at the Vo-Tech College?

In the present study, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the compulsory English course given at the Vo-Tech College were explored through the perspectives and experiences of the key stakeholders (students, English instructors, and principals). Thus the results of the study might assist to draw the detailed picture of the current status the compulsory English courses at Vo-Tech Colleges that is crucial for suggestions in order to improve the effectiveness of input, process and output. Besides, the findings of this study are expected to guide for those who want to eliminate the shortcomings and to support the strengths of teaching English at Vo-Tech Colleges. Additionally, there is neither common nor Vo-Tech specific English course curriculum. In this respect, the present study will be contributed to English course development studies in Vo-Tech Colleges by providing valuable and detailed input about the external and internal factors affecting quality of teaching English as a foreign language gained from the different stakeholders. Lastly, the related studies mentioned above has mostly conducted at undergraduate or VOCs, yet no single study exists which adequately portrays teaching English as a foreign language at Vo-Tech Colleges. Thus, it is believed that the results of the present study make contributions to the current literature.

2. METHOD

In line with the research questions, convergent parallel mixed design was employed in the present study. According to Creswell (2014), convergent parallel mixed design "is a form of mixed methods design in which the researcher converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem" (p.44). Since the focus of this study was on the investigation of the external and internal factors related to the compulsory English courses at Vo-tech College from different stakeholders, convergent parallel mixed design was used. Within the scope of the current study as given in Figure 1, the qualitative data collected from principals and English instructors via semi-structured interviews and the quantitative data collected from senior students via student questionnaire were analyzed separately then, the overall results were interpreted holistically as suggested by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2015). In addition, the research was approved by the Ethics Commission of Hacettepe University (ID 35853172-300, May 15, 2018).
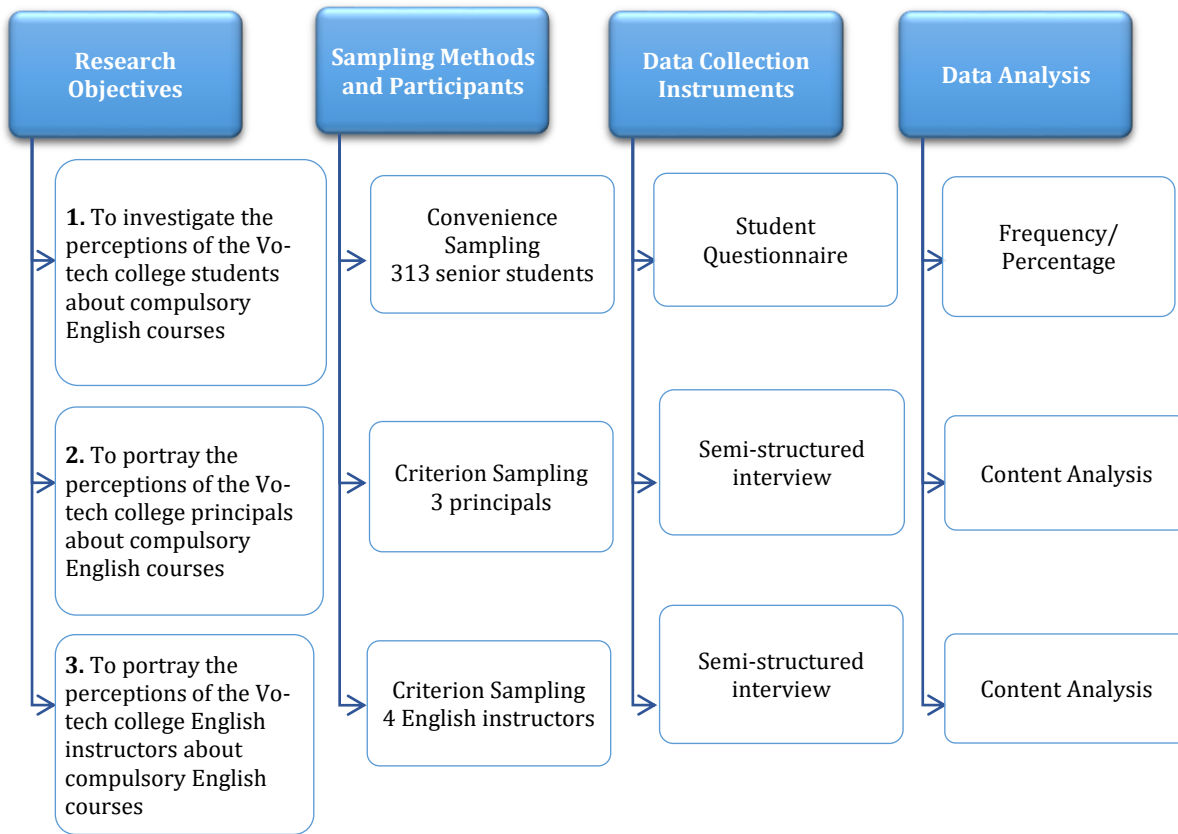
Figure 1. Flow chart of the research process

2.1. Participants

This study was carried out with two study groups, including senior students studying at the Vo-tech College of a state university in the Central Anatolia region and the principals and English instructors working in the same college. For the quantitative part of the study, 313 senior students who completed English I and II courses were selected via convenience sampling. The background information about the quantitative study group was given in Table 1.

Table 1.
Characteristics of the Senior Students

Background information	n	%
Gender		
Male	246	78.6
Female	67	21.4
Age	*n*	*%*
21 and below	238	76
22 and over	72	24
Type of graduated high school	*n*	*%*
Vo-tech High School	228	72.8
General High School	27	8.6
Anatolian High School	24	7.7
Imam Hatip High School	15	4.8
Others	17	5.5
Super High School	3	1

Table 1.
Characteristics of the Senior Students (cont'd)

Departments	Regular Program		Evening Program	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*
Electricity	30	9.6	15	4.8
Agricultural Machinery	16	5.1	*No student.*	
Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Technology	14	4.5	12	3.8
Food Technology	12	3.8	4	1.3
Printing and Publishing Technologies	11	3.5	4	1.3
Construction Technology	11	3.5	9	2.9
Control and Automation Technology	10	3.2	7	2.2
Chemical Technology	10	3.2	5	1.6
Map and Cadaster	10	3.2	9	2.9
Electronic Communication Technology	9	2.9	13	4.2
Building Insulation Technology	9	2.9	*No student.*	
Machine Painting and Construction	9	2.9	4	1.3
Furniture and Decoration	9	2.9	6	1.9
Computer programming	8	2.6	7	2.2
Shoe Design and Production	8	2.6	*No student.*	
Electronic Technology	7	2.2	8	2.6
Machine	7	2.2	9	2.9
Clothing Production Technology	7	2.2	4	1.3

For the qualitative part of the study, criterion sampling was used to select information-rich cases. While selecting English instructors, the criterion was determined as 'lecturing English I or English II at Vo-tech College in the last five years'; for selecting principals, the criterion was set as 'working at administration level and also lecturing vocational courses at Vo-tech College in the last five years'. In this respect, the qualitative study group consisted of three principals, and four English instructors working at Vo-tech College. The background information about the qualitative study group was given in Table 2.

Table 2.
Characteristics of the Principals and English instructors

Principals		**English Instructors**	
Gender	*n*	*Gender*	*n*
Male	3	Male	3
Female	0	Female	1
Age		*Age*	
49 and below	1	40 and below	1
50 and over	2	41 and over	3
Education		*Education*	
PhD	3	Bachelor's degree	1
		Master's degree	1
		PhD	2
Professional experience at Vo-tech College		*Professional experience at Vo-tech College*	
2 years and below	2	1 years and below	3
3 years and over	1	2 years and over	1
Number of courses given in Vo-tech College in the last 5 years		*Number of courses given in Vo-tech College in the last 5 years*	
1-5 courses	2	English I	1
6-10 courses	1	English II	1
		English I and II	2
Administration Experience at Vo-tech College			
2 years and below	2		
3 years and over	1		

2.2. Data Collection Instruments

The main data collection instruments of the present study were student questionnaire and semi-structured interview schedules developed by the researchers. The quantitative data were collected via Student Questionnaire (SQ). In line with the research questions, the steps followed during the development of the SQ were: (1) defining the problem through literate review, (2) writing items, (3) asking experts' opinions, (4) conducting pilot study (Büyüköztürk, 2005). In addition, the dimensions of SWOT analysis were also considered in each steps of SQ (Ağaoğlu, Şimşek & Altınkurt, 2006; Balamuralikrishna & Dugger, 1995; Dominici, 2017; Dinçer, 2013; Humphrey, 2005; Krisnawati, Mei & Puspitaningtyas, 2019; Orr, 2013; Ozan,

Polat, Gündüzalp & Yaraş, 2015; Şahin, 2013; Thomas, Chie, Abraham, Raj & Beh, 2014; Zhu & Mugenyi, 2015). After the construction of the first draft, expert opinion was taken from five faculty members working in different state universities in Turkey. According to the feedback received from the experts, necessary changes were made. For the piloting, the draft SQ was administered with 44 senior students enrolling different programs at Vo-tech College. During this process, it was observed that the students had some difficulties especially in understanding opportunities and threats; thus, short explanations were added to open-ended questions. The final SQ consists of three parts. The first part consists of demographic background information of the students (gender, age, program enrolled in, etc.). In the second part, there are eight open-ended questions about the strengths and weaknesses of compulsory English courses that they completed at Vo-tech College and one open-ended question focusing on students' suggestions to improve weaknesses. The last part includes five open-ended questions on the opportunities and the threats related to compulsory English courses at Vo-tech College, and one open-ended question asking students' recommendations to eliminate threats.

The qualitative data were collected through the semi-structured interview schedules from the principals and English instructors to portray the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats related the compulsory English courses at Vo-tech College. Two parallel schedules were developed by the researchers considering the principles stated by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016) as well as the related literature on the focus of the research problems. The draft schedules were sent to five faculty members working in different state universities in Turkey for the purpose of expert opinion. Then, the pilot study was carried out with a principal and an English instructor working in different Vo-tech College. The necessary changes (wording, add/remove prompts, etc.) were made accordingly. The final interview schedules for principals and instructors consisted of three parts. The first part includes questions about demographic background information. In the second part, three questions were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of compulsory English courses. The third part consists of four questions on the opportunities, the threats and the suggestions related to compulsory English courses at Vo-tech College.

2.3. Data Collection Procedures and Data Analysis

After the approvals from Ethics Commission of Hacettepe University and the Vo-tech College were received, the researchers contacted with the principal of the Vo-tech College to inform about the details of the study and to schedule data collection process. On the appointed time and date, the senior-year students' classes were visited by the researchers to administer the Student Questionnaire, totally 313 students accepted to voluntarily participate in the study. Further, the interviews were conducted with three principals and four English instructors who had volunteered to participate in the study. All interviews were audio recorded and lasted approximately between 30 to 40 minutes.

Upon completing the data collection process and necessary screening procedures, the quantitative data obtained via SQ were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods (frequency and percentage) by SPPS-22. The qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews were subjected to content analysis. The steps suggested by Creswell (2014) and Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016) were followed. In this respect, the raw data were anonymized (using pseudonyms for principals P1, P2; for English instructors EI1, EI2, etc.) and transcribed firstly, the transcriptions were read carefully. Then, the initial codes were formed. Through organizing and revising the initial coding of transcripts, categories and themes were clustered in line with the dimensions of SWOT analysis. To establish trustworthiness, the scope and procedures of the present study were determined and explained comprehensively. Triangulation via data sources was also carried out among the participants. Further, the data were supported with the quotes from participants as well as presented in details in order to provide thick description for the sake of trustworthiness of the study. Moreover, detailed literature review, experts' opinions, and pilot testing were also conducted to enhance validity and reliability for all the data collection instruments.

3. RESULTS

The findings of the present study are presented below in line with three research questions.

3.1. Strengths and Weaknesses of Compulsory English Courses

The first research question of this study was raised to portray the strengths and weaknesses of the compulsory English course given at the Vo-Tech College from the perspectives of students, English instructors, and principals. The results of the quantitative data gathered from 313 senior students via SQ revealed that the students stated four main strengths and seven main weaknesses of the compulsory English courses. As given in Table 3, the main categories about the strengths of compulsory English courses were "instructors' qualifications" (f=359), "teaching-learning process" (f=279), "classroom conditions" (f=163) and "four basic language skills" (f=105) whereas the main categories about the weaknesses were "teaching-learning process" (f=491), "classroom conditions" (f=82), "lack of vocationally-related course content" (f=63), "access to foreign resources" (f=43), "four basic language skills" (f=39), "demotivated student profile" (f=32) and "instructors' qualifications" (f=25). Among the strengths stated by the students, "Instructors' pedagogical content knowledge and skills" (f=165) and "technological conditions of the classrooms" (f=122) were frequently emphasized. Considering the weaknesses, the results indicated that the "Insufficient weekly course hours" (f=162) and "heterogeneous groups" (f=127) were frequently-stated weaknesses of the English courses.

Table 3.
The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Compulsory English Courses according to the Students

Strengths of English Courses*	*f*
Instructor qualifications	*359*
Pedagogical content knowledge and skills	165
Communicating effectively with the student	85
Professional experience	73
Professional commitment	36
Teaching-learning process	*279*
Diversity in teaching process	67
Technology-supported teaching	60
Weekly course hours	56
Textbook / notes	53
Homogeneous groups	33
Communicative language teaching	10
Classroom conditions	*163*
Technological conditions	122
Physical conditions	41
Four basic language skills	*105*
Reading	30
Writing	29
Speaking	29
Listening	17
Weaknesses of English Courses	*f*
Teaching-learning process	*491*
Insufficient weekly course hours	162
Heterogeneous groups	127
Repeated teaching of the same topics	55
Textbook / note-oriented teaching	53
Grammar-based teaching	43
Crowded classrooms	31
Limited use of teaching materials	16
Mother tongue-oriented teaching	4
Classroom conditions	*82*
Technological conditions	65
Physical conditions	17
Lack of vocationally-related course content	*63*
Access to foreign resources	*43*
Four basic language skills	*39*
Reading	13
Speaking	11
Writing	7
Listening	5
Grammar	3
Demotivated student profile	*32*
Instructors' qualifications	*25*
Ineffective classroom management	15
Inability to communicate effectively with the student	9
Ineffective use of voice	1

* Since open-ended question contains multiple answers, the number of answers exceeds the total number of participants.

Among four English instructors participated in the study, only two of them mentioned the strength of the compulsory English courses offered at the Vo-tech College. According to these instructors, the stronger aspect of the courses was "instructors' pedagogical content knowledge and skills" (f=2). EI2, emphasizing the content area knowledge, stated that *"Absolutely, the instructors who lecture the English courses at Vo-Tech are the experts in their fields. They are working at the Department of Foreign Languages, not coming from another departments or faculties."* In a similar vein EI1 mentioned *"The instructors who are the responsible for the English courses at Vo-Tech are not only subject matter experts, but also teaching of subjects in English".* Considering the weaknesses, English instructors were expressed three main themes as the weaknesses of English courses, namely, "teaching-learning process" (f=9); "classroom conditions" (f=4) and "demotivated student profile" (f=2). In relation to the teaching-learning process, EI1 put emphasis on low/heterogeneous student achievement profiles in English and stated

"Vo-Tech College students' knowledge and skills about English are very low, when they start to the college; most of them have no English skills. In my opinion, it is mostly related to the fact that vocational high school graduates can enroll two-year programs without taking any centralized exams."

Similarly, another English Instructor, EI2, believed that teaching English as a foreign language in heterogeneous classes effectively were difficult, and expressed that: *"In Vo-Tech College, the English course classes are mixed, not constructed according to the students' achievement in English. There is no homogeneity in the classrooms, so teaching-learning process is affected negatively".* Another weakness related to teaching-learning process mentioned by some instructors was insufficient weekly course hours. EI4 stated that *"The time devoted to the compulsory English courses is certainly not enough for teaching-learning of foreign language. After two-hour lesson completed, I observe that student leaves classroom without knowing or learning anything".* EI2, who also believed that two-hour English lesson in a week is inadequate, expressed her opinions as follows: *"The course hours are absolutely insufficient to teach English. In a two-hour lesson, the actual time spent on instruction is about an hour, not more."* Two English instructors mentioned "crowded classrooms" as another weakness related to teaching-learning process of the compulsory English courses. EI3 stated:

"There are about 80-100 students at Technical Sciences Higher School. We divide them into three sections at the School of Foreign Languages and there are about 36 students in each class. However, at Vo-Tech College, they did not let me to divide students in two sections, and on top of that they merged two classes and asked to teach in one class. Of course it is not suitable. In such an over-crowded class, there is no appropriate learning atmosphere, no setting to teach… In a class of 80 students, you realize that English lesson is like storytelling, just to be full of words. "

In addition, EI4 believed that "repeated teaching of the same topics" was also the weakness related to the teaching-learning process of the compulsory English courses. His opinions were as follows: *"We start every year with am, is, are, present simple tense, past tense that's all. The same topics are also covered in primary and secondary schools."*

Furthermore, the English instructors participated to the present study stated "classroom conditions" (f=4) as one of the main themes related to the weaknesses of English courses. Emphasizing the inadequacy of classrooms technological conditions, EI2 mentioned that *"There is neither a smart board, sound systems, etc. in classrooms, nor language laboratories at Vo-Tech College building; thus, it is very difficult to draw or gain students' attention to the lessons. It is an ordinary standard class… Technically there is not any opportunity…"* Another instructor, EI4, made similar point by stating that *"In classrooms, there is no sound system… Due to the traditional lecture setup of the classrooms, not allow mobility, students in back rows can't see me clearly and also can't hear my voice".* In addition to technical conditions, EI3 drew attention to the physical inadequacy of the classrooms, expressed opinions as follows:

"Vo-Tech College… in terms of physical conditions, the worst place at the university. Apart from only a few faculties, all of the students are taught English at the School of Foreign Languages, in our prep classes. Our classrooms are arranged to teach and learn English, we have smart boards, and other technological media".

The last main theme related to the weaknesses of English courses was "demotivated student profile" (f=2) stated by some instructors. EI2 explained opinions as *"In generally speaking, almost 80% of the students do not have enough motivation to learn English. They need to feel the necessity of English, yet they say they don't need English anyway."* Another instructor OG3 also stated that *"When compared to others, the Vo-Tech College student profile is the weakest and the lowest group in terms of English knowledge and motivation".* Besides, the findings obtained from the analysis of the interviews conducted with three principals revealed that P1 is the only principal mentioned that the compulsory English courses in the Vo-Tech College has the stronger aspect. According to P1, "technological conditions of Vo-Tech College building" offers opportunities for students to access foreign sources, *"Although we accept that there are not many opportunities, but students can use computers at Vo-Tech, they can access to internet through college's connection…They can access foreign resources. Thus, I don't think there is an obstacle to learn English."* Regarding the weaknesses, the principals were stated two main themes as the weaknesses of English courses, namely, "teaching-learning process" (f=8) and "classroom conditions" (f=2). In relation to the weaknesses of the teaching-learning process, three of the principals mentioned insufficient weekly course hours. P1 stated that *"In my opinion, two-hour foreign language lesson in a week is not didactic, not serve to the purpose of instruction".* Similarly, P2 said *"… I don't think having two hours of lessons is sufficient for English lessons."* Another principal, P3 also stated that *"Two hours is not enough, it is definitely too short to teach English in 80 minutes in a week".* Moreover, some principals believed that Vo-Tech college students' low prior knowledge in English was also weakness related to teaching-learning process. P1, drawing attention to students' poor English skills in secondary education, said that *"Apart from the graduates of Anatolian high schools or private high schools, most of the Vo-Tech College students don't have readiness of English or have adequate prior knowledge when they enroll in Vo-Tech College".* The similar point made by P2 as follows

"Most of the students in Vo-Tech College are those who could not pass university entrance exam, these students have to enroll or prefer two-year association's degree programs. Their academic background is quite lower than those who enroll four-year undergraduate programs. That is why there is a problem with the Vo-Tech College students' low background skills in English".

Another weakness related to teaching-learning process mentioned by some principals was grammar-dominated teaching. P1 stated *"If we really want to teach English, we must make it easier for students after school. The biggest problem is grammar-dominated teaching. Ignoring practice, communicative skills are the biggest problems".* P3 also highlighted the grammar-dominated approach, and said that

> *"Our biggest problem is that the focus of the English lessons is on teaching of grammatical rules, we try to embody these (grammar) rules in the classroom, at every moment. That is, let me take the verb to the beginning, let the subject be in the middle, let the subject be at the end, verb 1 and verb 2, etc. English lesson are filled up with grammar, nothing else. As a result, we are in trouble."*

In addition, P2 believed that crowded classroom was also the weakness related to the teaching-learning process of the compulsory English courses. His opinions were as follows: *"Although we know that either reaching or exceeding maximum seated capacity of classrooms negatively affect teaching, we have to merge classes in the evening education due to the financial issues. 80-100 students in a class, over-crowded, is the weakness."* The last main theme related to the weaknesses of English courses was "classroom conditions" (*f*=2) stated by some principals. P3 stated *"We have nothing in classrooms other than a projector ... In the building; there are also no computer labs, no headphones, etc."* In support of P3's view, P2 stated, *"...lack of technological materials and equipment is the problem. English lessons are taught in a traditional classroom, only with a projection."*

3.2. Opportunities and Threats of Compulsory English Courses

The second research question of this study was raised to portray the opportunities and threats of the compulsory English courses given in the Vo-Tech College from the perspectives of students, English instructors, and principals. The results of the quantitative data gathered from 313 senior students via SQ indicated that the students stated three opportunities and two threats of the compulsory English courses. As given in Table 4, "the importance of English in professional life" (*f* =135), "equivalent academic standards for learning" "(*f*=31), and "university library" (*f*=17) were emphasized as opportunities provided in Vo-Tech College related to the English courses. Regarding the threats, the students stated that "students' lack of intrinsic motivation for learning vocational English" (*f*=42) and "lack of extra-curricular activities" (*f*=38).

Table 4.
The Opportunities and Threats of the Compulsory English Courses according to the Students

Opportunities	*f*
The importance of English in professional life	135
Equivalent academic standards for learning	31
University library	17
Threats	*f*
Students' lack of intrinsic motivation for learning vocational English	42
Lack of extra-curricular activities	38

The analysis of the qualitative data gathered from four English instructors yielded three opportunities and one threat. According to the instructors participated to the study, "the importance of English in professional life" (*f*=3); "English clubs for students" (*f*=1) and "international students" (*f*=1) were the opportunities related to the English courses. Emphasizing "the importance of English in professional life ", EI2 stated that:

> *"It doesn't matter, in which program, for instance electricity, automation, map, etc. students enrolled, after all, everybody here will graduate somehow, may be in two years, or in three years, or maybe in four years, it doesn't matter, but after graduation, the default question for any workplace anywhere will be asked: 'Do you speak a foreign language?', ' Yes I do.' Then the following default questions will be asked 'Do you speak a second foreign language, do you speak a third one? ..."*

EI3 also made similar point by saying:

> *"... A student is studying Air Conditioning. He will gain basic knowledge and skills about air conditioning in Vo-Tech College, after two years, he will graduate and then, for a while, he will start to work in this field. If he knows English well, he can expand the basic professional knowledge and skills. He can be able to understand the resources written in English in foreign countries about air conditioning and develop himself professionally ... He can even market his products with the help of English".*

Moreover, EI2 mentioned "English clubs for students" and "international students" providing opportunities to practice and support for learning English. According to EI2,

> *"There are English clubs on campus... Other than that, if student is really curious about English and wants to learn, s/he will find much more opportunities on campus. For example, in our university there are international students*

who can speak English… Also there are Mevlana or Farabi exchange program students who actually come from abroad and for those the common language is English. Thus, if our students want to improve their English skills, they can talk to these international students".

On the other hand, "Vo-Tech College students' ineligibility to apply Erasmus-like mobility programs" (*f*=3) was perceived as only threat by the English instructors. EI1 stated that *"The most important thing is to provide students international opportunities to practice English. However, such international mobility programs are not provided in the Vo-Tech College or university".* In a similar vein, EI2 expressed opinions as follows "*There is no Erasmus opportunity for Vo-Tech College students, in order to apply Erasmus program students must enroll at least four-year undergraduate programs".*

Further, the results indicated that the principals perceived four opportunities and one threat related to the compulsory English courses in the Vo-Tech College. "current efforts on international student mobility" (*f*=3), "the importance of English in professional life" (*f*=1), equivalent academic standards for teaching" (*f*=1) and "language courses" (*f*=1) were highlighted as the opportunities. Most of the principals acknowledged the importance of internationalization in terms of English proficiency and believed that the current Vo-Tech College administration made great efforts. P2 explained these efforts as follow "*The issue of student mobility is take into consideration by Vo-Tech administration, for instance, our colleague X conducted meetings with the students and gave information about international activities".* P3 also said that *"X, a colleague, carries out informative activities, meetings, etc., in my opinion; X makes a great effort to take the Vo-Tech students abroad."* Another principal, P1 explained his opinion as *"Although our university has Erasmus program agreements for student mobility, only the students enrolling in four-year programs can apply. However, our college X organize meetings, currently he informed the students about National Agency's abroad opportunities".* Moreover, EI2, who is the only principal perceiving "the importance of English in professional life" as one of the opportunity, stated that

> *"In some vocational courses such as AutoCAD, Solidwork, etc. the language of the software program is English and students should learn the use of these programs. So, the need or desire to learn English might increase. Besides, it is the fact that speaking in English opens to doors for more prestigious and better-paying jobs".*

Another principal, P3 compared the Vo-Tech College with other universities' faculties and VOCs' in the district and concluded that "*Considering the Vocational Colleges in our neighborhood, most of them don't have technical classes, computers, etc. I think our conditions even equal with faculties."* In addition, P1 considered "language courses" offered by the university's continuing education center as the opportunity and said that *"In addition to the formal education process, there are also language courses given by the university's continuing education center. I think these courses might be regarded as language learning opportunity provided for all students in our university".*

According to the results, "Vo-Tech College students' ineligibility to apply Erasmus-like mobility programs" (*f=2*) was stated as a threat by the principals. P2 said that

> *"We have neither Erasmus opportunity, nor international cooperation agreements. Although some of the faculties in our university made cooperation with the universities abroad, the Vo-Tech College is not eligible for Erasmus".* In a similar perspective, P3 also mentioned that "Some faculties go abroad and conduct activities with foreigners. Some foreign faculty members also visit to our university and work cooperatively. In this respect, they are good at English. Our students do not involve in such international programs, like Erasmus".*

The SWOT analysis result of the compulsory English courses is summarized in Figure 1.

3.3. Suggestions for Improvement of Weaknesses and Elimination of Threats of Compulsory English Courses

The last research question of this study was raised to portray the suggestions to improve/eliminate weaknesses and threats of the compulsory English course from the perspectives of students, English instructors, and principals. The results of the quantitative data gathered from 313 senior students via SQ indicated that the students suggested totally 19 solutions related to two main categories, namely suggestions for "HEC, University, Vo-Tech Administration" (*f*=351) and for "teaching-learning process" (*f*=269). As given in Table 5, "increasing the course hours" (*f*=158) and "use of different teaching activities and materials (*f*=72) were frequently mentioned recommendation by the students.

Table 5.
Students' Suggestions for Improvement of Weaknesses and Elimination of Threats of Compulsory English Courses

Suggestions	*f*
regarding HEC, University, Vo-Tech Administration	351
Increasing the course hours	158
Organizing travels/trips abroad	48
Improving technological equipment in classrooms	43
Placement of students in same-level English course classes	35
Setting up English language laboratory	22
Hiring native-speaker instructors	4
Improving physical conditions of classrooms	3
Providing Erasmus-like international mobility programs for students	3
Providing international mobility programs for English instructors	1
regarding the teaching-learning process	269
Use of different teaching activities and materials	72
Implementing more speaking activities to improve speaking skills	58
Student-centered instruction	48
Integration of technology	28
Inviting native-speakers to classes	8
Implementing more reading activities to improve reading skills	8
Providing individual extra-curricular activities for students	8
Increasing students' exposure to the target language during lessons	4
Paying more attention to continuity and spiral process in teaching	3
Implementing more writing activities to improve writing skills	1

The results also indicated that the English instructors suggested seven solutions to improve/eliminate weaknesses and threats of the compulsory English course. Like the students, the instructors recommendations were highlighted under two main categories, as suggestions for "HEC, University, Vo-Tech Administration" (*f*=7) and for "teaching-learning process" (*f*=4). Considering the suggestions addressed to "HEC, University, Vo-Tech College Administration" were stated as improving the physical and technological conditions of classrooms; providing social environments where the target language can be practiced with foreign students; placing Vo-Tech students in same-level English course classes; and setting up English language laboratory were suggested by the instructors. Besides, the instructors' suggestions related to teaching-learning process were designing instructional activities that cultivate students' curiosity, inviting native-speakers to classes and fostering students' reading and listening skills in English. Similar to the students and English instructors, the principals suggested eight solutions related to "HEC, University, Vo-Tech Administration" (*f*=8) and for "teaching-learning process" (*f*=3). According to the principals, increasing the course hours, providing Erasmus-like international mobility programs for Vo-Tech students, increasing language courses within the university, providing English Language School preparatory programs for Vo-Tech students, improving the physical conditions of classrooms, and setting up English language laboratory were the recommendations for "HEC, University, Vo-Tech College Administration". Finally, fostering students' speaking skills in English, and inclusion of vocational subjects/topics were the principals' suggestions for teaching-learning process.
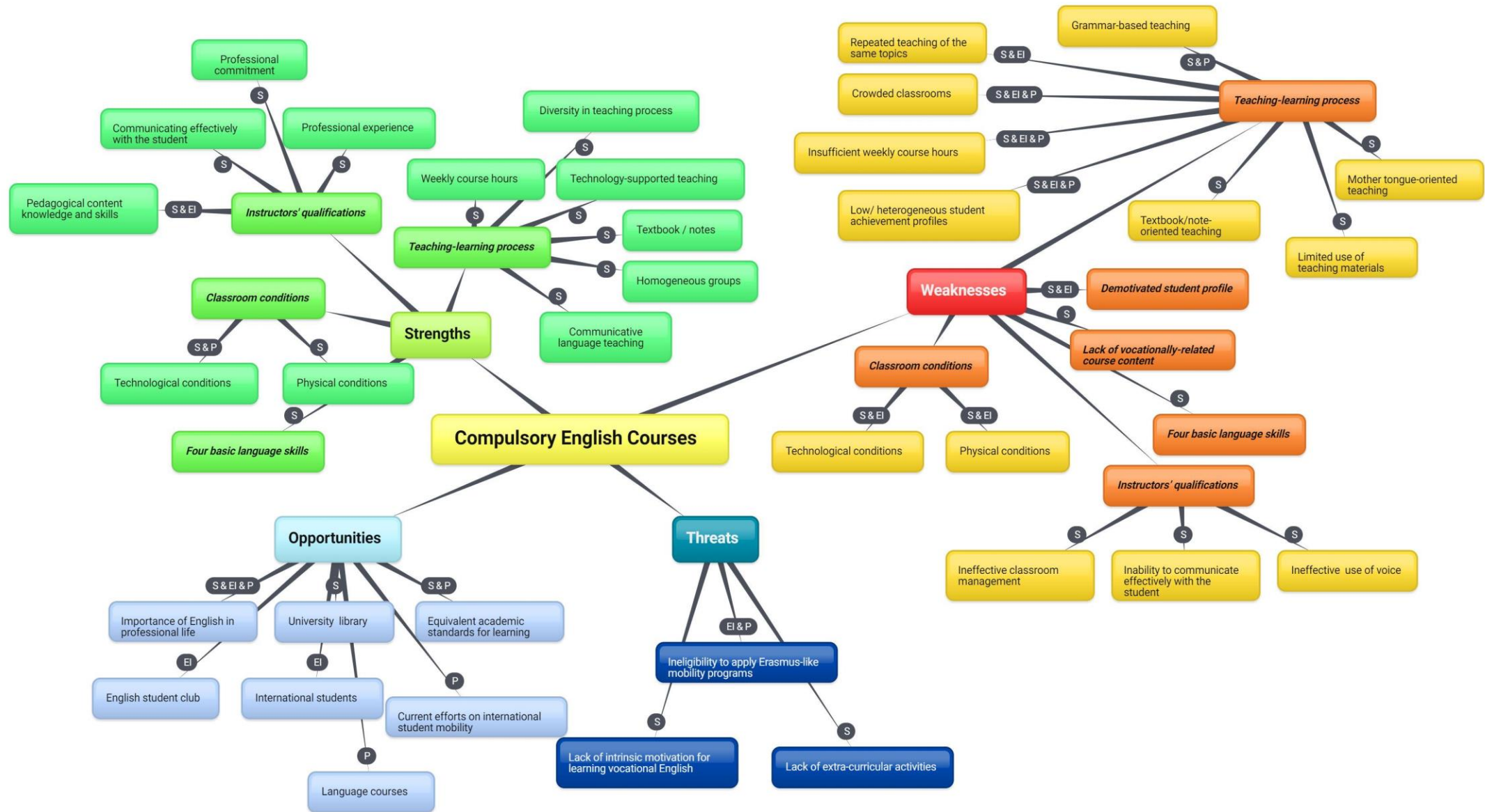
Figure 1. The SWOT analysis results of the compulsory English courses in the Vo-Tech College

S: Students; EI: English Instructors; P: Principals

4. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the present study, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the compulsory English courses given in the Vo-Tech College were explored through the perspectives and experiences of the key stakeholders (students, English instructors, and principals). Considering the strengths of the compulsory English courses, both the students and English instructors put emphasis on quality of instructors and teaching-learning process. In line with the aspects of well-known Instructional Design Models by Dick and Carey (1978), Smith and Ragan (1999); Morrison, Ross and Kemp (2004), this finding is also revealed teachers' qualifications, learning environment, instructional strategies, methods and techniques, instructional materials, etc. are the crucial factors. Besides, the literature also highlighted that English instructors should have professional knowledge (e.g. reading, writing, listening, speaking in English, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar skills, etc.) and professional skills (e.g. designing teaching-learning process, field-specific teaching methods and techniques, etc.) in order to design an effective learning environment in which both students' curiosity and language skills are developed (Arıkan, Taser, Saraç-Süzer & Sezgi, 2008; Calderon, Slavin & Sanchez, 2011; Dinçer, Göksu, Takkaç & Yazıcı, 2013; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009). Regarding the English instructors in the study, one of them has undergraduate degree, one has master degree and two of them have doctorate degree; some of them studied abroad and all of them participated to international conferences. In this respect, the quality of instructors and teaching-learning process stated as the stronger aspects of the compulsory English courses by the students and the instructors might be considered as a promising finding. However, both the instructors and principals stated only one the strength regarding the English courses, so it can be interpreted as a negative indicator of the current status of the teaching-learning process. Indeed, only one principal mentioned technological conditions of Vo-Tech College building as the strength. This result may be related to the fact that the principals have insufficient knowledge about teaching-learning process in English courses due to their administrative duties or field expertise, and therefore, they might evaluate the English courses within the framework of their administrative duties (e.g. in terms of planning the course schedule, classrooms arrangements, technological or physical conditions etc.). On the other hand, the only strength emphasized by the principals with regard to the English courses is not directly related to the English course, but for the Vo-Tech College in general and this is another indicator that the principals do not have sufficient knowledge about the current problems related to the compulsory English courses. Although some of the studies have emphasized that the role of school principals in the success of teaching-learning process of English (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; McGee, Haworth, & MacIntyre, 2015; Munguia, 2017); according to the findings of the current study, the principals' support for teaching-learning of English might be unrealistic expectation since their awareness about the actual practices in English classroom is too superficial. In Oktay's study (2015), the administrators' insufficient support for foreign language teaching was also found as one of the problematic issues. It is also important to note that there is no commonly-emphasized strength by the students, English instructors and principals.

With regard to the weaknesses of the compulsory English courses, all of the stakeholders in the study stated the issues related to teaching-learning process and classroom conditions. Particularly, insufficient weekly course hours, low and/or heterogeneous student profiles in English, crowded classrooms, physical and technological inadequacy of the classrooms were commonly-shared weaknesses of the compulsory English courses. Previous studies also pointed out the similar problems in English classes supporting this conclusion (Babanoğlu & Ağçam, 2016; Dağlı, 2011; Ersungur, 2013; Gökdemir, 2005; Musa, Lie, & Azman, 2012; Oktay, 2015; Sarıtaş, 2013; Sarıtaş & Arı, 2013; Xu, 2001; Yaman, 2018). Taking all the weaknesses into account, the study clearly revealed that the current status of the compulsory English courses in the Vo-Tech College is far from the intended goal of teaching English as a foreign language. The results might be also associated with the lack of needs analysis studies, which is the first stage of curriculum development process. Indeed, one of the main reasons behind the weaknesses, perceived by the stakeholders in the study, is that there is neither common nor Vo-Tech specific English course curriculum developed by considering the theoretical foundations, practical issues, stakeholders' needs, etc.

Regarding the opportunities, all stakeholders mentioned the importance of English in professional life and the equivalent academic standards for learning. In addition to commonly-shared opportunities, university library were only stated by the students; English clubs for students, and international students at university were only stated by the instructors; current efforts on international student mobility and language courses were only stated by the principals. On the other hand, the Vo-Tech College students' ineligibility to apply Erasmus-like mobility programs was perceived as only threat both by instructors and principals. In the study of Alkan, Suiçmez, Aydınkal and Şahin (2014), the ineligibility of the VOC students' to study abroad programs was also found as one of the common problems of VOCs. Considering the fact that international mobility programs not only offers opportunity to study at foreign universities but also provides chance to experience different sociocultural contexts, it is crucial for students to participate in international mobility programs in order to gain different perspectives and improve their language skills. This finding obviously calls for new regulations or making changes in the current regulation for the students in VOCs and Vo-Tech Colleges to participate in international mobility programs. Although the threats mentioned by the students might be more related to internal factors, than externals; it is worth to report that according to the students, the threats are students' lack of intrinsic motivation for learning vocational English, and lack of extra-curricular activities.

The stakeholders' solutions to improve/eliminate weaknesses and threats of the compulsory English course were focused on two main themes, namely the suggestions for HEC, University, Vo-Tech Administration and the suggestions for teaching-learning process. Considering the suggestions addressed to HEC, University, Vo-Tech College Administration, the stakeholders recommended for increasing the course hours, improving the physical and technological conditions of classrooms; providing social environments; placing Vo-Tech students in same-level English course classes; setting up English language laboratory;

providing Erasmus-like international mobility programs for Vo-Tech students, increasing the number of English courses; and , providing English Language School preparatory programs for Vo-Tech students. Besides, use of different teaching activities and materials, cultivating students' curiosity, inviting native-speakers to classes and fostering students' reading, speaking and listening skills in English, and inclusion of vocational subjects/topics were the suggestions related to teaching-learning process. The solutions suggested by the participants of the current study are in accordance with findings reported by Arora, Joshi, Koshy and Tewari (2017); Davies and Pearse, (2000); Demir, Kapukaya and Özfidan (2015); Koru and Akesson (2011) and Özdem (2013).

Overall, the findings of the current study can be considered as the evidence calling for both structural and instructional changes. However, the main issue to be resolved is development of English course curriculum according to the specific needs of Vo-Tech Colleges' stakeholders. In this respect, theoretical and practical bases of curriculum development, namely conducting needs assessments, piloting, curriculum evaluation, etc. should be taken into consideration. It would be beneficial to get support from curriculum development specialists. Considering the instructional and structural changes, it is suggested to give priority to the common needs of the stakeholders as higlighted in the present study. Lastly, the findings of the study limited to the data obtained from stakeholders (students, instructors and principals) in the Vo-tech College of a state university in the Central Anatolia region. Thus, future studies might be conducted in different Vo-Tech Colleges in different regions, by employing qualitative research designs to gain in-depth insights of Vo-Tech College students.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

In this research, research and publication ethics were followed. The research was approved by the Ethics Commission of Hacettepe University (ID 35853172-300, May 15, 2018).

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

Gülçin Tan-Şişman: Establishing the theoretical and methodological basis of the research, organizing the findings, discussion and conclusion parts.
Özlem Bozok: Data collection and organization of the findings.

Statement of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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