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Statistical reasoning of methodological intervention to a language teaching program

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Abstract

This research is based on a quasi-experimental study throughout which a methodological intervention to a language teaching program was conducted at the English preparatory school of a university and the statistical reflection of the impact level of intervention was determined. Two groups, one quasi-experimental group and one control group, were randomly selected among the lowest proficiency level groups for this research. The quasi-experimental group followed the official English language teaching program supported with the supplementary communicative and authentic materials which aimed to improve the communicative competence and communicative performance as well as the structural knowledge, and the control group followed the official program implemented without the supplementary materials. The program lasted a full academic year and the overall results revealed that the impact of the intervention resulted in favour of the quasi-experimental group.

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1. Scope of the study

The primary objective of all scientific studies and research is to make progress in order to achieve the best possible solution or a result at a desired level on a specific issue, and the primary objective of all language studies is no different. In academic studies, there is always a search for better understanding of the issues, as well as improving the effectiveness of existing methods or techniques, or contributing to the arguments relevant to a specific issue. Most language teaching research mainly focus on finding out the most effective teaching and testing methods which would fit into the specific needs and requirements of the relevant subjects (Savignon 1991, 2002). All language teaching programs should focus on teaching for the specific needs and requirements of the learners (Brown 1988, 1994). However, it may not always be possible to achieve the desired results at the end of the programs due to various factors which weaken or negatively interfere with the research process. The teaching environment in which this study takes place is not much different from that of other traditional ones, and therefore, this study primarily focuses on some issues which are considered to be important factors in designing and implementing the language teaching program in such a context. The main objective of this research is searching for possible ways to improve the effectiveness of the preparatory EFL/EAP language program as well as the proficiency level of students in using the language skills through a quasi-experimental study, and finding out the statistical reflection of methodological intervention to a traditional language teaching program.

The specific aim of carrying out the quasi-experimental research is to find out whether, after the intervention, a significant difference would have appeared between the measured outcomes of the official program which is mostly centred around teaching the language forms of the target language, and the research-based teaching which is centred around an intervention using supplementary communicative activities and authentic materials along with the official program. In language teaching history, the effectiveness of various language teaching methods has long been argued (Hedge 2000, Johnson 2001). The effectiveness of communicative teaching in language implementation process was also discussed a lot, however, on the contrary to other language teaching methods and approaches, much regarded (Canale and Swain 1980, Savignon 1983, Brumfit 1984, Ellis 1984, Demirel 1992, Celce-Murcia *et al* 1997). A research on the effectiveness of communicative approach in language teaching, which was carried out by Savignon (1972), initiated the current focusing on communicative language teaching, communicative competence, and role and importance of authenticity in language teaching (Xiaoju 1990, Thompson 1996, Flowerdew and Matthew 2001, Cameron 2002). Throughout this research, which also focused on development of certain language teaching materials in line with the official language teaching program (Tomlinson 1998, Tudor 2001), it was aimed to find out whether the instructional differences on the basis of communicative teaching in a full year English language teaching program result in positively in terms of outcomes.

1.1. The need for the study

The reasons for the investigation emerged from the need to search for possible ways to increase the level of achievement towards the program objectives and effectiveness in EFL/EAP programs since it was felt that the existing EFL/EAP program does not either achieve the objectives of the program as required, or meet the requirements of the client departments. A pre investigation was conducted and existence of this problem was put forward by the stake-holders (EPS teachers, testing officers and EPS students) considered to be directly relevant or indirectly relevant (teaching staff in the specialist departments and students studying in the specialist departments) from two major universities. Thus, the second and the main part of this research is based on a quasi-experimental research conducted throughout the EFL/EAP program of one of the EPSs of these universities.

1.2. Significance of the study

As the concept of the communicative approach and the role of authenticity in language teaching gathered increasing importance since the 1980s and still remains important in the ELT literature today, it is believed that the outcomes of the present research will contribute to the debate with a specific study with respect to its feasibility and value in introducing communicative and authentic elements into a fairly traditional teaching context which is mostly based on popular course books used throughout the world (Savignon 1983, Brumfit 1984, Brown 1995). There are a number of studies which have been carried out in the past and inspired this study, too. The primary aim of these studies was to investigate possible ways to improve the effectiveness of language teaching programs and contribute to the arguments in this field by providing solid statistical figures.

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