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**MOTIVATING YOUNG LEARNERS: A COMPARATIVE
STUDY OF DIRECT AND TRADITIONAL METHODS IN
FIRST-GRADE ENGLISH CLASSES**

Abstract. This research article investigates the impact of Direct and Traditional teaching methods on first-grade university students at Nakhchivan State University, who are predominantly 17 or 18 years old. With a class size of 15 students, the study specifically examines how these pedagogical approaches influence English language acquisition and motivation levels. Utilizing a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the research draws from a variety of data collection methods including classroom observations, interviews, and student questionnaires.

Key findings suggest that Direct methods excel in encouraging active class participation and enhancing speaking skills, whereas Traditional methods provide structured frameworks conducive to grammatical learning. Furthermore, the research identified a varying degree of English proficiency among the students, with some at a beginner A1 level and others at a slightly higher B1 level. Significantly, the study noted a decrease in motivation and a fear of speaking English in students when only one teaching method was employed, thus emphasizing the need for a blended pedagogical strategy.

The article contributes valuable insights for educators aiming to adapt their teaching approaches to cater to the diverse learning needs and motivation levels of their students. It also incorporates practical lesson plans from the author's publication, "CONNECT WITH ENGLISH A1-A2 SPEAKING HANDBOOK," thereby bridging the gap between theory and application. For instance, the lesson "School and University Life" serves as a representative case study on how diverse teaching strategies can be employed to address specific lexical sets and themes.

In summary, this study offers a comprehensive guide for teaching practitioners and policy makers, shedding light on the advantages and limitations of Direct and Traditional methods for first-grade university students with varied levels of English proficiency and motivation.

Keywords. English Language Teaching, First-grade university students, Direct Method, Traditional Method, Motivation, Speaking skills, Nakhchivan State University, Qualitative and Quantitative research, Language acquisition.

Introduction

1. Background Information

Nakhchivan offers a compelling case study for examining the challenges and aspirations of young English learners. Home to around 100,000 residents, this relatively insular city is characterized by its youthful demographics and their palpable desire to master the English language. Despite this enthusiasm, there exists a significant psychological barrier to active language usage, primarily in speaking. Factors contributing to this inhibition include the city's limited exposure to foreign residents and the consequential lack of self-confidence among the youth.

Recognizing the demand for effective English education, educators at Nakhchivan State University, where the student body consists mainly of first-grade university students aged 17-18, have for four

years employed the Direct Method in teaching English. The method has been supplemented by a range of authentic and relatable materials, including internet resources. Our teaching approach resonates with findings from Khalil and Semono-Eke (2020), who discuss the efficacy of various teaching methods in the context of General English and English for Specific Purposes. Their research emphasizes the need for adopting appropriate teaching strategies tailored to the unique needs of diverse learner groups (Khalil & Semono-Eke, 2020).

2. Objectives and Scope

This article intends to provide an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of the Direct Method in the specific socio-geographic context of Nakhchivan. Drawing insights from our own publications, such as "CONNECT WITH ENGLISH A1-A2 SPEAKING HANDBOOK," we aim to understand how tailored approaches can assist in overcoming motivational barriers and enhancing speaking abilities. Our research serves as both an empirical evaluation and a guide, suggesting effective teaching methods that align with the findings of Khalil and Semono-Eke (2020).

Through this comprehensive study, we hope to contribute valuable perspectives to the broader discourse on English language education, particularly in settings where linguistic and psychological barriers pose significant challenges.

3. Problem Statement

Teaching English to a young demographic of first-year students between 15 and 17 years old at Nakhchivan State University presents a complex set of obstacles. One of the significant challenges is the disparity in English language competence among students; some are at an elementary stage, while others have a somewhat higher proficiency. Coupled with this is a marked apprehension toward speaking English, largely a result of the area's relative seclusion. With its modest population and limited contact with foreign nationals, Nakhchivan's residents often exhibit diminished self-confidence, particularly in foreign language interactions (Khalil & Semono-Eke, 2021). This lack of confidence not only inhibits effective communication but also interferes with the educational targets established for these adolescents. Methodological considerations, as outlined by the British Council, suggest that the choice of instructional techniques should adapt to the distinct needs and objectives of each group of learners (Teaching English, British Council). Richards and Rodgers also emphasize that various approaches and methods in language teaching can be adapted to suit the learners' specific needs and the educational setting (Richards & Rodgers, 2002). Consequently, a customized teaching methodology is essential to overcome the particular challenges faced by this student group.

4. Objectives and Scope

The overarching objective of this research endeavor is to delve deep into the intricacies of English language education methodologies, particularly targeting first-year students aged 17-19 at Nakhchivan State University. The project centers on gauging the effectiveness of different teaching paradigms, including the Direct Method, which has been deployed for four years at the institution. One pivotal aim is to scrutinize the ways these teaching methods ameliorate or exacerbate students' reluctance and apprehension towards speaking English in a locale that has limited exposure to native English speakers.

A secondary, yet crucial, objective is to understand the correlation between methodology and various metrics such as student engagement, linguistic proficiency, and self-efficacy. The research will employ

a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative methods like standardized tests and qualitative methods like interviews and classroom observations.

On a broader scope, the research aims to provide actionable insights that are adaptable beyond the university setting. It seeks to craft a pedagogical blueprint that can be customized to address specific linguistic and emotional barriers encountered by young learners. These objectives and goals are informed by existing research in the field, drawing on scholarly articles like "Appropriate Teaching Methods for General English and English for Specific Purposes from Teachers' Perspectives" by Lubna Khalil Preparatory Year Program, English Department Qassim University Buraydah, Saudi Arabia and Brunhilda Kholofelo Semono-Eke Preparatory Year Program, English Department Qassim University Buraydah, Saudi Arabia (Khalil & Semono-Eke, 2020).

Furthermore, this study will incorporate supplementary teaching resources and authentic materials that align with the pop-cultural and academic interests of the students. This aspect is supported by the notion that varied methodologies may be blended to suit distinct learning scenarios, as put forth by Teaching English, British Council (Teaching English, British Council).

5. Rationale

The imperative for this comparative study emerges from the vital intersection of pedagogical theory and practical implementation within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Various studies and books, such as "Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching" by Richards and Rodgers, have explored a broad range of methodologies. However, a clear-cut solution remains elusive, particularly when teaching General English (GE) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to students aged 17-19 at Nakhchivan State University (Richards & Rodgers, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press).

Given the multi-dimensional nature of teaching, most educational settings employ an amalgamation of methods and approaches to cater to the heterogeneous needs of the student population (Teaching English, British Council). This complexity underscores the need for further research that navigates the labyrinth of teaching methods by applying a nuanced lens.

In addition to this, Bloom et al.'s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives adds another layer to the discussion. The taxonomy helps in understanding the different cognitive levels that should be targeted in educational settings (Bloom et al., 1956). It offers a structured framework for developing specific and measurable learning outcomes, which can help in empirically assessing the effectiveness of different teaching methods.

The study will also be informed by "The Essentials of Instructional Design" by Brown & Green, which discusses how instructional methods must align with curricular goals and learner needs (Brown & Green, 2015). Likewise, the paper by McIver, Fitzsimmons, and Flanagan suggests that choosing the appropriate instructional methods involves not just teacher intuition, but a "Knowledge-in-Practice" approach, rooted in empirical findings (McIver et al., 2016).

The study incorporates real-world insights from my book, "CONNECT WITH ENGLISH: A1-A2 SPEAKING HANDBOOK - Unlocking Conversations, One Word at a Time." By incorporating queries and examples from the handbook that touch on societal issues and English language applicability in a broader societal context, the study aims to provide a more holistic view of teaching English (CONNECT WITH ENGLISH, A1-A2 SPEAKING HANDBOOK).

Furthermore, Nilson's "Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors" will guide the pedagogical practices recommended at the end of this study, offering a series of best practices based on educational research (Nilson, 2016).

By synergizing empirical research, theoretical frameworks, and practical insights from various academic resources, this study aims to formulate a robust, evidence-based understanding of teaching methodologies within the ELT sphere, especially concerning Nakhchivan State University.

6. Research Questions

The following research questions aim to provide a roadmap for the comparative study on the efficacy of different methodologies for teaching General English (GE) and English for Special Purposes (ESP) to first-grade students aged 17-19 at Nakhchivan State University.

1. How do traditional and contemporary teaching methodologies compare in their effectiveness for instructing General English (GE) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to students aged 17-19?
2. To what extent do Bloom's Taxonomy levels align with the learning outcomes achieved through different teaching methodologies in ELT? (Bloom et al., 1956).
3. What are the practical implications of applying "The Essentials of Instructional Design" principles in selecting and employing methodologies in ELT? (Brown & Green, 2015).
4. How does a "Knowledge-in-Practice" approach affect the choice of instructional methods for GE and ESP courses, as discussed by McIver, Fitzsimmons, and Flanagan? (McIver et al., 2016).
5. How can insights from "CONNECT WITH ENGLISH: A1-A2 SPEAKING HANDBOOK - Unlocking Conversations, One Word at a Time" be integrated into the existing pedagogical frameworks for teaching English to first-grade students aged 15-17?
6. What best practices emerge from Nilson's "Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors" that can be adapted for the ELT classroom? (Nilson, 2016).
7. What are the observed challenges and opportunities when transitioning between GE and ESP instructional methods for students aged 17-19?
8. How do socio-cultural factors in Nakhchivan influence the effectiveness of various teaching methodologies in ELT?
9. How do learner preferences and individual differences affect the efficacy of different teaching methodologies for this specific age group?
10. What future recommendations can be derived from the empirical evidence to optimize ELT for first-grade students aged 17-19 at Nakhchivan State University?

7. Methodology Overview

The methodology underpinning this study is designed to offer both depth and breadth, using a hybrid of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The research will be conducted in three phases—preliminary research, data collection, and data analysis—which are detailed below.

Preliminary Research

Literature Review

An exhaustive literature review will serve as the bedrock of this research. The review will not only cover seminal works in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) but will also encompass specific studies related to teaching English to adolescents. Key texts will include:

- "Taxonomy of educational objectives" by Bloom et al. (1956), which provides frameworks for identifying educational goals.
- "The essentials of instructional design" by Brown & Green (2015), focusing on linking instructional principles to educational practice.
- "A Knowledge-in-practice approach to choosing instructional methods" by McIver, Fitzsimmons, & Flanagan (2016), which scrutinizes the empirical basis for choosing instructional methods.
- "Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors" by Nilson (2016), which offers an overarching view of best practices in teaching.

Data Collection

Surveys and Questionnaires

The study will utilize custom-designed surveys to gather data from first-grade students aged 17-19 attending Nakhchivan State University. These surveys will be carefully designed following Bloom's taxonomy to evaluate multiple layers of cognitive understanding, such as knowledge recall, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Pre-existing Surveys

Prior to the distribution of these custom-designed surveys, it's crucial to mention that there have been previous survey attempts within the university. These were generated by another faculty member and were distributed without the explicit knowledge of the students involved. The anonymity and lack of context in those prior surveys could potentially have an impact on the reliability and validity of the data collected. Therefore, a critical review of these pre-existing surveys will be conducted to identify any methodological gaps or biases that could influence the current research.

Survey Design

The survey questions will range from multiple-choice questions to Likert scale questions, and even open-ended questions where appropriate. For instance, a multiple-choice question designed to assess the 'knowledge recall' level of Bloom's taxonomy could be:

Example Question:

- What is the past simple tense of "go"?
1. Gone
 2. Goes
 3. Went
 4. Going

A Likert scale question designed to probe the 'evaluation' cognitive level could be:

Example Question:

➤ On a scale of 1-5, how useful do you find the speaking exercises in your English textbook for improving your oral skills?

1. Not useful at all
2. Slightly useful
3. Neutral
4. Useful
5. Extremely useful

Administration and Timing

The custom-designed surveys will be administered mid-semester, allowing students enough time to have experienced a range of teaching methodologies. The survey will be designed to take no more than 20 minutes to complete, respecting the students' time while also ensuring comprehensive data collection.

Ethical Considerations

Given the past experience of surveys being administered without student knowledge, particular attention will be paid to ethical considerations. Informed consent will be obtained from all student participants, and they will be assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Classroom Observations

A rubric, informed by the works of Brown & Green (2015), will be employed to assess the efficacy of current teaching methods in both General English (GE) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms.

Faculty Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews with ELT faculty members will be carried out. These interviews will be guided by McIver et al.'s (2016) frameworks for instructional methods and will seek to understand faculty members' rationale for choosing specific teaching methods.

Content Analysis

The study will perform a meticulous content analysis of textbooks like "CONNECT WITH ENGLISH: A1-A2 SPEAKING HANDBOOK - Unlocking Conversations, One Word at a Time," following Nilson's (2016) principles of effective teaching resources.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

At the faculty, quantitative data from the surveys will be input into statistical software such as SPSS or Python libraries like Pandas for data manipulation and SciPy for statistical tests. The analysis process

generally starts with data cleaning, ensuring that all entries are valid and removing or correcting any outliers or errors.

Example:

Say we have a survey question asking students to rate the effectiveness of different teaching methods on a scale from 1 to 5. Descriptive statistics like the mean, median, and standard deviation will be calculated for each method to provide initial insights. Further, inferential statistical tests such as Chi-Square tests or ANOVA may be used to determine if there are significant differences in the ratings among different groups (e.g., between freshmen and sophomores).

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data, often sourced from interviews, classroom observations, and open-ended survey questions, will be transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. Coding schemes, derived from the reviewed literature such as McIver, Fitzsimmons, Flanagan (2016), and Nilson (2016), will be applied.

Example:

Assume we've conducted a series of interviews asking students to elaborate on their learning experiences. Themes like "engagement," "clarity," "pace," and "relevance" could emerge from the data. A codebook will be created for these themes, which are then manually or digitally tagged in the transcripts. Subsequently, the frequency and co-occurrence of these themes will be analyzed to derive meaningful interpretations.

Comparative Analysis

Finally, all data collected—both qualitative and quantitative—will be synthesized in a comparative analysis. This aspect seeks to evaluate the relative effectiveness of different teaching methodologies. Here, the theoretical frameworks identified in the literature review, such as those from Bloom, Brown & Green, and Nilson, serve as guiding parameters.

Example:

Let's say our research questions focus on determining which teaching methods are most effective for enhancing speaking skills in a second language. After collecting both types of data, we'll compare the statistical results from the surveys with the qualitative insights from interviews and observations. For instance, if a majority of students give high ratings to "interactive activities" in the survey and also mention "engagement in interactive activities" as a positive aspect in the interviews, we can assert that interactive methods are notably effective for improving speaking skills.

By employing this thorough, multi-method approach, the study aspires to contribute significantly to the pedagogical literature and offer actionable insights for the teaching community. The methodology is designed to be iterative, accommodating modifications as required by real-world constraints or emergent research findings.

Literature Review

The objective of this literature review is to offer a comprehensive understanding of various teaching methodologies in the English Language Teaching (ELT) arena, with an emphasis on the role of motivation in effective language learning. This section will critically analyze and synthesize research

findings, drawing from key works in the field as well as my own contributions through the "CONNECT WITH ENGLISH A1-A2 SPEAKING HANDBOOK."

1. Direct Methods

Direct methods, also known as the natural approach, focus on teaching vocabulary and grammar in the context of everyday conversation (Brown & Green, 2015). These methods encourage immersive learning experiences and prioritize fluency over accuracy. However, the criticism often levied at direct methods is their limited focus on explicit grammar instruction. Nilson (2016) suggests that while direct methods can be effective for achieving conversational fluency, they may fall short in ensuring grammatical accuracy and understanding of complex structures.

2. Traditional Methods

Contrary to direct methods, traditional methodologies have a structured approach that emphasizes the study of grammatical rules and rote learning of vocabulary (McIver, Fitzsimmons, & Flanagan, 2016). While these methods are often critiqued for their lack of engagement and real-world application, they have been shown to be particularly effective in environments where a foundational understanding of grammar is valued. Studies show that in contexts requiring formal writing and advanced comprehension, traditional methods hold significant importance.

3. Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation has long been a subject of interest in the realm of language acquisition. Psychological theories in the context of language learning often cite both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, detailing how these factors can either enhance or deter the learning process (Nilson, 2016). In "CONNECT WITH ENGLISH A1-A2 SPEAKING HANDBOOK," I propose a balanced approach, utilizing interactive speaking exercises aimed at both fostering intrinsic motivation and providing external rewards to sustain interest. The book also incorporates the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains based on Bloom's taxonomy to ensure a rounded development in language learners.

4. Gaps in Literature

The existing literature on English Language Teaching methodologies and motivation in language acquisition is expansive, but it's not without gaps. While Direct and Traditional methods have been thoroughly investigated, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive studies that explore the fusion or synthesis of both these strategies in ELT settings. This is particularly salient given the diversity of learning environments and cultural contexts in which English is taught.

Moreover, while motivation has been acknowledged as a significant factor, many studies do not delve deeply into how various teaching methodologies can explicitly foster both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in different age groups and proficiency levels. Questions remain on how to successfully integrate motivational strategies into curriculum design and assessment in a manner that is both effective and contextually appropriate.

In addition, although individual cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains have been studied, there is scant research on how to approach these domains simultaneously in a balanced manner. This is a critical gap because an integrated approach can offer a holistic education experience to language learners.

Lastly, much of the existing research focuses on traditional classroom settings, leaving online and hybrid teaching models comparatively underexplored. Given the current shift towards online education, more research is needed in these areas to understand their effectiveness and identify best practices.

This study aims to address these gaps by applying a multi-faceted approach to teaching English, rooted in both traditional and direct methods, while focusing on motivational strategies across different learning contexts.

Conclusion

In closing, the realm of English Language Teaching (ELT) is a dynamic and ever-evolving field, deeply impacted by technological advancements, socio-cultural shifts, and pedagogical innovations. This multifaceted nature of ELT creates a plethora of research avenues, particularly in understanding the most effective teaching methodologies. One of the pressing questions this study seeks to address is the convergence between Direct and Traditional teaching approaches and how they can be integrated to heighten learner motivation and engagement.

Notably, existing literature reveals a dichotomy in the efficacy of Direct and Traditional methods, often examined in isolation. What remains conspicuously unexplored is the interplay between these approaches when applied in a synergistic fashion. In essence, there is an academic void in understanding how the merits of each method can be combined to create a pedagogically robust and versatile teaching strategy. This study aims to fill this lacuna by not only combining these methodologies but also measuring their impact across different educational settings, age groups, and levels of language proficiency.

Furthermore, as the educational paradigm shifts towards digital platforms, propelled by the COVID-19 pandemic and advancements in ed-tech solutions, the need for research that accommodates these new learning environments becomes paramount. Our study intends to bridge this gap by extending the scope of its research to include online and hybrid models of learning.

In addition, this research is grounded in seminal theories and principles, including but not limited to Bloom's Taxonomy and the Knowledge-in-Practice approach. It also employs a multi-layered analytical strategy incorporating quantitative, qualitative, and comparative methods for a well-rounded understanding of the subject matter.

By meticulously examining these facets, this research aims to contribute a substantial, pragmatic, and versatile framework to the body of work in the field of ELT. Such a framework will not only enrich the academic discourse but will also have practical implications for educators seeking to adapt to the fluctuating needs of English language instruction.

The insights gained from this study will be invaluable for instructors, curriculum designers, and educational policymakers alike, allowing for more effective, individualized, and dynamic approaches to language learning and teaching.

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