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Time spent in target language-oriented extracurricular activities and foreign language students' satisfaction

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Abstract

Depending only on curriculum sometimes might be annoying not only for learners, but also for teachers. Thus, extracurricular activities are a useful theme in education that can create a positive atmosphere in students' life. Students will be motivated to perform their curricular goals by spending time in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities will make students acquire confidence and empower them to demonstrate their skills and abilities with composure in the classroom practice. These activities will ensure students a language learning ambiance, and promote them to develop their level of English. This paper puts forward how the time spent in language-oriented extracurricular activities facilitates English language learners' satisfaction.

Key words: extracurricular activities, practice, language learning, educational life, technology.

Introduction

Nowadays, it can be said that the most difficult issue for lecturers is to maintain students' attention during the whole lecture. Although educators are expected to be experts in class management, they still have difficulties in it. Students are often unmotivated, unwilling, uninterested, sleepy and hungry in the morning sessions. Their life is not well-planned. On the other hand, there is a force that causes students to study (because of the final course-passing exam) and makes lecturers be in a speedy pace to teach the necessary points before exams. There are many issues to be taken into account to teach crucial skills to unmotivated students before the final exam. Definitely, it is hard work. Lecturers firstly are to be patient and ideal people to change students' laziness through the teaching process (Newstead & Hoskins, 2003). Some language-learning-oriented activities should be organized outside of regular school hours, during lunch time breaks, after school or at the weekend (McCaslin, 1996). As a matter of fact, informal curriculum should be followed for the English learners, to achieve success and to provide motivation.

Educators' role in ECAs

As 'actions speak louder than words', to change our students' unacceptable insistence, uninterested craving for laziness, first of all, lecturers have to be sophisticated and reliable educators (Thompson et al, 2013). Because in teaching English, the closest and best model are the lecturers.

It is known that learning does not occur at once, it is a long process. While some students learn English during class time, for some students that teaching might be insufficient or they may need some extra care. In that case extracurricular activities – ECAs - are the best remedy to change our students' learning ways.

Moreover, dealing with the students who need extracurricular activities teachers are expected to develop various activities according to students' needs (Furner et al, 2005), because some students can learn English better in visual, oral, listening or/and motor activities (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

Method

A quantitative research (questionnaire survey) was held after the volunteer respondents participated in ECAs for three weeks.

Participants

As the number of students in Ishik University Suleymania branch is not many; only 18 students of preparatory school students participated in the filling in the survey. The number of male students was (12) and the number of female students was (6). Their mean age ranged from (18) to (25).

Five participants among 18 students initially did not care about participating in ECAs, but eventually were persuaded to join in them. While the study was going on, more students also expressed their desire to join in such activities. From the obtained data, it can be said that students who participate in language-oriented ECAs get happier and more satisfied; this triggers other students also to enroll in them.

Types of language-oriented ECAs

During the time of the study, there the following ECAs were applied:

1-Testing and Analyzing (Headway Elementary Grammar and Vocabulary): Students were given 30 questions to answer in 15 minutes in each additional meeting; they were supposed to answer on their own. After that their test papers were swapped and answers were given. Students checked their friends' paper and then a 20-minute discussion and analyzing started. This occurred twice a week.

2 - Fun Reading ECA (Easy Starter books reading and telling): Students were given books with CDs and had to read a book within a week and to fulfill some tasks. The students were expected to answer the lecturer's questions asks in 10-minute sessions on a weekly basis.

It is recommended to hold these activities for a semester, then change them for some other activities.

Measures and procedure

The data were obtained from the 16- question anonymous questionnaire. The top 13 answers included 3 scales: a) yes b) no c) I do not know. The last three questions were information questions with three scales. The students had to choose the acceptable for them answers. Students were warned that honest answers were expected in order to take further action that would motivate them and help them improve their language skills.

All students were in an English class. They were told that the answer they would give to the questions would be used only for research purposes. After analyzing them, new plans would be arranged for developing their English skills. Some points were explained during their selection.

Results and discussion

Many scholars state that ECAs can lead students to higher educational success, help students to gain better grades (Marsh, 1992) and students get higher scores in tests (Gerber, 1996).

The majority of the students in the study have breakfast in the morning, but 18% do not, so it is difficult for them to concentrate in class. While 50% of the respondents think that it is difficult to have classes in the morning, 82% agree that having classes in the afternoon is also difficult. 82% of the respondents answered they liked doing homework at home alone. However, 94% found ECAs useful, and 50% even think that they are more useful than homework done alone at home. On the other hand, probably, more interesting tasks could be given as only 50% of students answered they enjoyed ECAs.

The majority of the respondents participated in ECAs on their own will (88%). This is a very good result.

I have also come to the point that the students who are constant participants to ECAs are much more dynamic, eager to learn and more satisfied in life than non-participants. Moreover, they are also sure that joining in ECAs brings them satisfaction and feel that they learn better.

Gaining satisfaction

Participation in ECAs is very important. During the educational process learners find out gaps in their knowledge / skills and realize the value of joining in ECAs. They learn from their own mistakes or their friends, develop many working skills, learn managing time and prioritizing things in their life, learn about long-term commitments, make contributions while answering the questions, raise their self-esteem, and build solid relationship in social situations. Knowing and feeling these benefits cause students to build up satisfaction.

Conclusion

ECAs are a useful part of education at students' language learning process. Being voluntary, they play a great role in their lives. They change positively their behavior, study performance and appetite for learning, so that students get successful by joining ECAs and become satisfied.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM RESULTS

ITEMS	Yes%	No%	I have no idea%
1-Do you usually come to school having breakfast?	82	18	0
2-Is it difficult to have lessons in the mornings?	50	50	0
3- Is it difficult to have lessons in the afternoons?	82	18	0
4-Do extracurricular activities help you to improve your English?	94	0	6
5-Do you enjoy preparing your homework alone at home?	82	18	
6-Do you think that you learn more by extracurricular activities than studying at home alone?	50	32	18
7-Do you think that students should stay at school for extracurricular activities?	88	6	6
8- Do you think you need speaking-based ECAs after lessons?	82	12	6
9-Do you enjoy language-oriented ECAs in preparatory school?	50	6	44
10-Do you get motivated by ECAs in learning English process?	50	18	32
11- Do you think you need writing-based ECAs after lessons?	40	28	32
12- Do you think you need listening-based ECAs after lessons?	66	17	17
13- Do you think you need reading-based ECAs after lessons?	76	12	12
14-How many hours do you study English at home? a) 2-3; b) 1-2; c) 0-1	a) 25	b) 50	c) 25
15-How many hours of ECAs are enough for you a week a) 4-5; b) 2-3; c) 1?	a) 17	b) 50	c) 33
16-Do you participate in ECAs because a) you want it; b) your lecturer wants you to come; c) your parents want you to attend?	a) 88	b)12	c) 0