

The Key to Success in English Learning Can Be Involvement in Extra Curricular

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Abstract: Extracurricular activities are a key element to use in language education process that can provide positive gains for learners. These activities can impel students to succeed in their curricular goals. Extracurricular activities will help students to get confidence and enable students to display their skills and abilities with ease in a classroom practice. These activities will provide students a language learning environment, and encourage students to improve their level of English. This paper puts forward how extracurricular activities facilitate English language learning process.

Keywords: Extracurricular activities, skills, practice, language learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Extracurricular activities are student experiences and activities that are not included in the educational curriculum. These activities are a significant part of education. It has been proved that extracurricular activities are as necessary as regular classes for development of skills (Tenhouse, 2003; Eccles, 2003). Furthermore, extracurricular activities are good opportunities for students to achieve their curricular goals. Students discover and develop their skills through these activities for achievement.

Though research to explore the relationship between extracurricular activities and student achievement has been continuing, their benefits for higher educational attainment have been put forward. Extracurricular activities are performed at all levels of schools in many different ways such as sports, clubs, debate, music, art, school newspaper.

Extracurricular activities will lead to higher educational success and they will help students to get better grades in the examinations (Marsh, 1992). Students through these activities get higher scores in tests (Gerber, 1996). Extracurricular activities will raise aspirations of students and create a positive bond between students and school. When students are positively connected to their schools, they will have confidence for a better perception of knowledge that will lead to efficiency in learning. Extracurricular activities will help students build good relationships among peers; therefore, when students participate in these activities, their classroom engagement increases. Extracurricular activities will provide students practice environments, and these practice opportunities will enable students to gain confidence. Students will stand a better chance of displaying their skills and abilities in a confident classroom practice.

Extracurricular activities affect students' positive attitudes towards learning and school. Those students who perform well in activities will develop self-esteem because of their accomplishments. Self-esteem will be a key role in promoting their achievement at school; moreover, extracurricular activities will establish an environment for students to use the knowledge they have learnt at school. Students will have an opportunity to practice the knowledge in real-life settings.

Really, the work of teaching and learning are a time-consuming process and educational interaction between teachers and students. The aim of the educational interaction is related with three aspects, as they are called cognitive, affective and psychomotor. To succeed these objectives, maximum work of a teacher in transmitting of the material, techniques and methods, classroom management, and some other issues are essentially required. Moreover, teachers are expected crucially to be more creative to support learning activities for students in the classroom and they should organize some extracurricular activities after lessons.

Extracurricular activities as above mentioned are "activities conducted outside of school hours". Extracurricular activities are to be done in school or out of school depending on the demands and convenience of extracurricular activities. To be more precise to learn English language, extracurricular activities, such as extracurricular English language debate, journalism club or drama club activities are often carried out in or outside the school to be more fluent in pronunciation and successful in life in general.

Shortly, to brief description above, the extracurricular activity supports students' learning activities. Students who dealt with extracurricular activities to be successful in their learning environment shows that; the majority of students who often take part in student council, English debate, language labs, and so, also actively participate in learning activities in the classroom.

The Effect of Extracurricular Activities on English Learning:

Actually, at the beginning of the 20th century, extracurricular activities issue was taken into consideration to some extent. The aim was to grow out of curricular activities and return to curricular activities to enrich them in America (Millard, 1930). It was believed that only school curriculum itself was not enough to develop the student. Since then educators have seen the usefulness of extracurricular activities and suggested using ECAs as supplementary actions to use in or out of the school for students' sake. There are so many benefits of language oriented extracurricular activities on students' learning English.

ECAs can ensure a lot of interaction among participants. Students can learn from each other while doing any extracurricular activity together. As mistakes make perfect, they will be able to gain knowledge by practicing and experiencing in terms of paying attention to learn from mistakes.

ECAs can provide strong friendship. Students can build a warm environment and tolerance to their peers. They can find a unique opportunity to know well each other. The more they learn about each other, the greater respect is given mutually.

ECAs can teach students to be cooperative. Students can feel that being cooperative is much more important than being competitive. Students will be directed to do the activity together and they will intend to reach the same target together. They will acquire the reality that many hands make great work.

Students can discover their talents or skills by ECAs. They can lead the group members in an ECA and improve their leadership skill. They can be given some responsibilities to fulfill so that they can get ahead in their life considering the experiences they have gained in ECAs.

With ECAs, students will be able to learn to learn. As it is said, "practice makes perfect"; students will be able to learn what they have picked up theoretically at lesson by practicing it in real conditions. As there is not enough time for lecturers to deal with each individual to practice English activities in classroom, students will have a chance to repeat them practically in ECAs.

ECAs ensure students' devotion to school. Davalos and Chaves (1999) state that students who participate in ECAs are more likely to spend time at school than their uninvolved friends. They enjoy being at school on condition that activities are according to students interest and attractive to get motivated while participating.

ECAs can change the attitudes of introvert students positively. Some students in classes might be seen introverted because of the great number of students' population. For the lecturers to find out the students' personality, ECAs can be a key element. Students can find a lot of opportunities to share their ideas with their friends and teachers in small group ECAs. Either from the students' or teachers' perspective ECAs will be a good platform for interaction.

Extracurricular activities create a learning environment for second language learners. Meetings, interviews, presentations, and publication of school newspapers are useful activities in which students can take part in. Students through involving them can promote their communication skills. Similarly, the Direct Method aims to develop students' communicative competence. Such extracurricular activities as writing letters to students from other countries, holding debates and discussions in English where students need to use English at all times help students improve their English proficiency. The primary goal of the Direct Method is to get students involved in the target language. Extracurricular activities that are conducted in English will enable students to be exposed to the target language which will lead them to achievement in language learning.

Similarly, the goal of Communicative Language Teaching is to enhance communication skills of students. Students through games and role plays endeavor to reach a communicative competence. Extracurricular activities that are carried out in English are useful in that students will create an environment where they can share their ideas and opinions. These activities will encourage students to develop their communication skills.

In Task-based learning the students are asked to complete a task. Task in foreign language learning process is an activity that necessarily involves language (Richards, Platt, and Weber, 1985). Students try to create an outcome in task-based learning, and the role of the teacher is to regulate this process (Prabhu, 1987). Students via experimenting with the target language can advance their level of English, in particular, their communication ability. Extracurricular activities can teach students how to perform a task. To complete their tasks students need to discuss, and share ideas with each other. As a result these activities will highly contribute to language proficiency of students.

Especially in language preparatory programs, schools should organize sorts of language oriented extracurricular activities. Those activities will make learners have exposure to English language stratum. Learners can be curious researchers to search and practice what they are supposed to learn via extracurricular activities. Learners will gain the language merely by practicing without having any formal instruction without knowing anything concerning the theory behind it. They will learn it to feel by practicing.

2. METHOD

In 2014-2015 education year, I was assigned to work at new preparatory school in Suleimania as the vice principal. It was a good chance to do my experiment in Suleimania Preparatory School because the number of students was a few, just fifteen. I have used complex methods mainly communicative approach for fulfilling extracurricular activities. I claimed that via language-oriented extracurricular activities learners would be able to learn the target language just with fun and with tiny difficulties and students would be successful in the final examination and I thought that instead of giving much homework, having students exposure to ECAs might teach learners more effectively. This study has emphasized the effect of extracurricular activities in language learning, and focus on its roles for students in the improvement of knowledge of English. Data has been collected by means of a student's questionnaire and regular prepared achievement quizzes, level tests and final exam results.

Participants:

In this study, the learning process of 15 prep graduate students who have been our first preparatory school experimental group will be mentioned. Among the participants six of them were girls and nine of them were boys. One of the students were Arabic and did not have any English at all. The rest were Kurdish students and they were also in the same level mostly. The first time students come to school, they are supposed to take an "Oxford Level Test" to find out their level of English. Nearly %75 of them were in A1 level but at the end of 24 weeks intensive education year almost 80 percent of them have been carried to intermediate level and to me it is a great success. In Suleimania Preparatory School, students are responsible to study regularly because at the end of the year a difficult proficiency exam waits for them. Due to the exam results students may come to summer school to continue their education till they reach pre-intermediate level at least. As long as they fail in summer course they will have to repeat the course again. In order to succeed in the final exam, they are supposed to do their best in curriculum well. They are encouraged by their extracurricular coaches and they deal with the activities regularly as much as self-study at home. They are persuaded that they are able to manage the achievement test by joining language-oriented extracurricular activities.

Findings:

By this study, the facilitating role of how extracurricular activities have been shown in English language learning process. Through extracurricular activities, language input is acquired. My experimental group has studied for their education success. Constantly joining in extracurricular activities have led them to be more aware of the language patterns. A good proficiency of English language has helped students. Students have studied "Headway Book" series starting from "Headway Beginner and Elementary". Every 7 weeks in three terms, students had three hours a day course book, one level of the headway book series, 105 hours in seven weeks, adding this they were to do just one hour homework every day but they were expected to join 5 hours a week in extracurricular activities. These activities were held throughout the course and all students passed the English Preparatory School Program successfully. Students have had the final examination and a small survey. Final exam results and survey replies made me think that I was right in my thesis. The

results have been analyzed through quantitative method according to their final exam result in each semester. Moreover, on condition to show quality of experimental group; recorded videos have been saved as a qualitative material.

3. CONCLUSION

Extracurricular activities are useful in that they help students create positive attitudes to develop skills. Students become productive when they are involved in extracurricular activities. As long as students are encouraged to learn, they will stand a better chance of achievement. Achievement deals with students' capability, capacity, eagerness, regular participation in ECAs and their being sociable. Extracurricular activities can help students to have a good command of English at the same time. These activities support the characteristics of approaches we apply in a foreign language learning process. Those students who are involved in extracurricular activities can create a platform for promotion of language development. Moreover, instead of following routine school curriculum, school coordinators and language teachers should think about the language oriented extracurricular activities to be embedded and implemented in the school curriculum. Because, students cannot find sufficient time and opportunity while the language theory was thought and it is a good practice for learners to learn with friends and individually in extracurricular activities.

QUESTIONNAIRE AND ITS RESULTS:

This survey paper is prepared to find answer to the questions like what should be done and what is expected from your point of view from lecturers to improve English education in preparatory school via extracurricular activities. It is expected from you to select the best alternative on your own. Think about the questions seriously and put cross to the empty blank that true for you. You should provide your name on the list. Because, according to your needs actions will be done.

| Questions | Name: | YES% | NO% | 0 idea |
|---|-------|------|-----|--------|
| 1-Do you like the environment you have in Ishik Preparatory School? | | 88 | 6 | 6 |
| 2-Is just merely coming to school sufficient to gain knowledge? | | - | 100 | - |
| 3-Is it beneficial to join extracurricular activities before or after lessons? | | 94 | 6 | - |
| 4-Do extracurricular activities help you to improve your English? | | 94 | - | 6 |
| 5-Do you think if school education should keep up with extracurricular activities? | | 88 | 6 | 6 |
| 6-Do you think that you have gained more in extracurricular activities than studying at home? | | 88 | - | 12 |
| 7-Is it enjoyable to participate in extracurricular activities every day for some time? | | 72 | 12 | 16 |
| 8-Is learning English fun with ECAs? | | 94 | - | 6 |
| 9-Do you think language oriented ECAs should be organized in the afternoon? | | 84 | | 16 |
| 10-Do you build good friendship by ECAs in learning English process? | | 88 | 6 | 6 |

TABLES:

Here is the result of ECAs' effect on students' English learning considering the final test result. Students are accepted to university according to proficiency exam result which is held at the beginning of education year.

Table 1: Students are supposed to be at least in B1 level in Final Proficiency in order to be accepted successful students to study in their departmental studies the following year.

| Students' Name(Their names are hidden) | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| First Proficiency Test Result in Entrance to Ishik University Exam Date:6/1/2015 | A1 | A1 | A1 | A2 | A2 | A1 | A2 | A1 | B1 | B1 | A1 | A1 | A1 | A1 | A1 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Final Proficiency (Use of English+Listening) Exam Date:11/6/2015 | A2, B1 | B1, B2 | B1, B2 | C1, C1 | B1, B2 | B1, B1 | B1, B2 | A2, B2 | C1, C2 | C1, C2 | B1, B1 | B1, B2 | A2, B1 | B2, C1 | B1, B2 |
| Average: | B1 | B2 | B2 | C1 | B2 | B1 | B2 | B1 | C1 | C1 | B1 | B2 | B1 | B1 | B1 |
| RESULT | Passed(All students according to final result average passed) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 2: The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF or CEFR) was put together by the Council of Europe as a way of standardizing the levels of language exams in different regions. It is very widely used internationally and all important exams are mapped to the CEFR. In Ishik University the first time the students come they are sat in this examination in order to design curriculum according to students' needs.

There are six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. These are described in the table below.

| Council of Europe levels | Description |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| C2-Mastery | The capacity to deal with material which is academic or cognitively demanding, and to use language to good effect at a level of performance which may in certain respects be more advanced than that of an average native speaker. Example: CAN scan texts for relevant information, and grasp main topic of text, reading almost as quickly as a native speaker. |
| C1-Effective Operational Proficiency | The ability to communicate with the emphasis on how well it is done, in terms of appropriacy, sensitivity and the capacity to deal with unfamiliar topics .Example: CAN deal with hostile questioning confidently. CAN get and hold onto his/her turn to speak. |
| B2-Vantage | The capacity to achieve most goals and express oneself on a range of topics. Example: CAN show visitors around and give a detailed description of a place. |
| B1-Threshold | The ability to express oneself in a limited way in familiar situations and to deal in a general way with no routine information. Example: CAN ask to open an account at a bank, provided that the procedure is straightforward. |
| A2-Waystage | An ability to deal with simple, straightforward information and begin to express oneself in familiar contexts. Example: CAN take part in a routine conversation on simple predictable topics. |
| A1-Breakthrough | A basic ability to communicate and exchange information in a simple way. Example: CAN ask simple questions about a menu and understand simple answers. |

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