

Chapter Four: Research Design

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Introduction

The present chapter deals with the descriptive approach which has been conducted with students of second year of English at the University of Biskra and their teachers of written expression module.

1. Design and Methodology

The nature of the study which is to scrutinize the issue of writing within the CL in particular for English department teachers, actually calls for a descriptive method. According to Seliger & Shohamy (1989:157): "Descriptive research is based on understanding a phenomenon within the interactive framework of the environment where it occurs, without isolating variables".

Descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. The aim of descriptive research is to verify formulated hypotheses that refer to the present situation in order to elucidate it.

Firstly, we thought of a very effective approach for teaching the writing skill and that would help students to write correctly. Indeed, many approaches seemed to be appropriate to teach this skill. CL has been chosen as efficient for many reasons. First of all, it is easy method that can be implemented particularly in the Algerian context. Secondly, students can get equipped with rapidly. Thirdly, it provides learners with opportunities to share their ideas and thoughts.

To examine and test the research hypothesis: students may overcome their inability to write correctly if teachers are aware of the advantages of CL. We carefully designed the descriptive approach, our prediction have been checked through the results obtained from students and teachers questionnaires.

2. Variables

A Variable is a measurable characteristic that varies. It may change from group to group, person to person, or even within one person over time and does not remain constant. Independent variable is the circumstance or characteristics which the researcher can manipulate to determine its connection with the observed phenomenon. The dependent variable is the circumstance or characteristics that change, disappears, or appears when the researcher implements the independent variable. CL is the independent variable which is meant to have influence on the dependent variable the writing skill.

3. Target Population

In research, population has a specialized meaning. Theoretically, a population is the group from which your subjects are drawn. Therefore, it is also the group that your subjects represent. According to Marczyk (2005:18), the term population refers to individuals who are of interest to the researcher. To carry out this research, we have opted for the questionnaire to gather data, because it is one of the most appropriate means which enables the collection of information about the topic under study.

To obtain sufficient and subject-supporting data that provide adequate evidence on the appropriate way to carry out this investigation, the common research technique are the "elicitation techniques". Following Nunan (1999:230), "Elicitation is a range of procedures for obtaining speech samples and other data from subjects. Such procedures may range from administration of standardized tests through to questionnaires and interviews". Questionnaires are indeed the most popular and widely used means of collecting data; hence such tool has been used to obtain different perspectives about students and teachers opinions and standpoints concerning the items under investigation. Nunan (1999:143) states that: "The construction of valid and reliable questionnaires is a highly specialized business.

The questionnaire has been administered to second year students and their teachers of written expression module to ensure better language proficiency. The population to which we wish to generalize the results of the study is second year English students at Biskra University during (2006-2007) academic year.

3.1. Sample

The study can not be conducted on the entire population for some logical reasons. Marczyk (2005:18) argued for the need of choosing a representative group which displays the overall characteristics of the entire population of interest, it is extremely important that the sample be representative of the entire group. It is not useful to work with every member of the population. As a matter of fact, randomizing the groups boycotts the effects of such variables like the subjects' personal characteristics (sex, age, aptitude, intelligence...). Factors such as time, money, resources, energy...are the major reasons which necessitate any researcher to work with a sample. Miller (1975) explained the reason behind random selection is to provide equal chances for every number in it to be chosen from the population. Furthermore, it helps to prove the fact that our sample is a non biased one.

Our target population is 160 second year students at Biskra University. Thus, our simple is 56 students who are randomly selected and 06 teachers of written expression module. Students' questionnaire was supposed to be administered to the whole population of second year English classes at Biskra University. It was submitted at the beginning of the academic year where many students were absent. Therefore, it has unfortunately been obtained only 56 answered questionnaires.

3.2. The Participants

Students and teachers of written expression module are involved in this research. They are 56 second year English students at Biskra University, and six teachers of written expression out of six randomly selected from the target population. The sample of students is divided into two groups G1 and G2, each group consists of 28 students randomly selected.

The questionnaires used in this study are divided into two types: students and teachers' questionnaires. They aim at collecting the different opinions about the subject under investigation. Both questionnaires investigate nearly the same issues that have been discussed in the theoretical part of this research. The purpose being the introduction of both perceptions to make sure that the subjects matter is examined from different perspectives and studied from both dimensions.

4. Data Analysis

To confirm the hypothesis which states that if teachers are aware of the advantages of CL, students' inability to write is likely to be enhanced. To prove that, the descriptive results are to be reported then analyzed. Part One for teachers and Part Two for students.

Part One: teachers who have been teaching written expression module are asked both open-ended and close-ended questions. Responders are free to say what they like. Its main objective is to survey the teachers' methods and techniques they follow in teaching the writing skill. Moreover, it seeks to recognize teachers' attitude towards learners' difficulties in learning the writing skill, and the way each teacher deals with his/ her students' learning obstacles. Yet, the main concern of teachers' questionnaire is to probe teachers' about CL and its advantages in enhancing students' writing skill. The same procedures implemented on students.

Students are asked to give their ideas and opinions about writing as a skill and the way teachers are dealing with this skill. Moreover they are asked about CL as a

technique to teach the writing skill. Their answers are reported with analysis and comments.

5. Discussion

The results are discussed with the aim to know some of the reasons behind students' failure to write well and confirming the truth we supposed in our speculation.

Conclusion

The study provided empirical support for the claim that CL enhances students writing skill. In this research study, the adoption of the descriptive method using questionnaire addressed to students of English at Biskra University and their teachers of written expression shed the light on one crucial issue using CL to teach the writing skill. It is surprising that classroom practice is so oriented toward individualistic and competitive learning and it is so dominated by a competition/ individualistic structure. It is due to a set of reasons for instance, the overcrowded classes, the lack of motivation from part of teachers, the time factor and the instance curriculum.