

The English Resource Center as a means of Encouraging the Learning Process of the Language / Tova Goldman

Abstract:

"The English Language Resource Center" has been established in high schools as a result of changes that have occurred in the perception of teaching and learning strategies. The awareness of the importance of teacher's focusing on the individual student's capacities has been increasing in the last decades.

The traditional frontal teaching adjusts itself to avoid having so many levels in the heterogeneous class. The selective nature of these groups brought about psychological and social problems. As a result, educators' perception of the proper teaching strategies has been changed. The "Complex Instruction" (which takes place in the heterogeneous class and not in homogeneous groups) has been developed. The "Complex, Active Instruction" is a combination of both individual oriented teaching and group oriented teaching. Thus the heterogeneous class is divided into heterogeneous groups of 4-6 pupils. These pupils are given an assignment (research assignment, information analysis, activities which develop creativity, etc.). However, the experience, interests, level, personality and creativity of each individual in the group are strongly emphasized. This teaching methodology is enabled by changing the emphasis from ability and accomplishment expressed by tests to the process of the learning experience, the personality and talents of the individual which are expressed by assignments and tasks. A school focused on a task will bring about an improvement of the individual's potential, his creativity and his willingness to handle difficult assignments. In contrast, a school focused on ability might bring about negative competition, a fear of failure, and a damage to the self- image and motivation.

With a variety of resources the process of learning the language becomes full of interest, self - confidence, motivation and creativity. "Learning Centers" and "Resource Centers" are being established in many schools. One of these

centers is the “English Language Resource Center” (henceforth referred to as the English Room), which includes resources such as books, magazines, games, audio and video cassettes, computer’s software, internet, etc. The large variety of resources enables each student to find activities according to his level and areas of interest, therefore his self – confidence increases. The feelings of confidence and interest help the students focus on the assignment and prevent competition among peers. In such a way, cooperation between students and between students – teacher is encouraged.

The purpose of the present research was to examine the contribution, importance and efficiency of The English Room in the general frame of teaching the language in heterogeneous classes. The variables of the present study are: interest in the material taught, motivation, confidence, students’ cooperation, willingness to carry out creative projects, and achieving the goal of acquiring appropriate language skills. Moreover, the contribution of the computer to raising students’ interest and motivation has also been examined. The importance of the present research lies in the fact that it examines the efficiency of a new teaching methodology which is used in the heterogeneous class, a system which can improve the atmosphere in class, narrow the gaps between students and improve their academic achievements. The unique environment of The English Room may answer academic, psychological and social needs of the students, improve their interest, self – image, and motivation and thus raise their level of mastery of the English language.

The research assumptions were:

1. The large variety of resources and activities in the English Room enables a wide use of the language skills, yet there’s still room for adding resources and widening the activities.
2. Studying the language in the English Room raises students’ interest and motivation.
3. Learning the language in the English Room improves students’ self – confidence, their responsibility and their independent learning.
4. Learning in the resource center improves cooperation between students and the teacher.

