## 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.

- 5. Cooperation between the students is improved when they study in the English Room.
- The learning and the instruction process become more efficient and interesting as a result of using computers' software and the Internet in the English Room.
- 7. Students who study in The English Room don't use the library services when learning the English language.
- 8. A correlation will be found between the variables of this research: there is correlation between: the variety of activities in The English Room students' motivation their self confidence cooperation between students and between students and teacher the advancement in academic achievements.

Both a qualitative and a quantitative research examined the hypotheses of the research. Observations were held in four English Rooms in four different high schools. Each of them included different resources. In high school 1 a vital part of the instruction is done by the software- "English Discoveries". In high school 2 students learn English by means of the internet. In high school 3 there's a large variety of resources: Simplified and non-simplified novels, journals, audio and videocassettes, games and the Internet. In high school 4 there are simplified novels, textbooks, worksheets and audio and videocassettes. A comparison between the learning and the teaching process in the English Room and the classroom was enabled by the fact that observations were held in both learning environments.

The interviews with the English teachers in each of the schools clarified their opinion and outlook. Both the observations and interviews helped build the questionnaire, which was filled in by the students. The analysis of the data that was gathered by this questionnaire constitutes the quantitative part of the research. 333 students participated in the present research. The conclusions of the research were drawn by the findings of both the qualitative and quantitative research. The findings confirm most of the hypotheses.

The present study confirmed that there is a variety of activities in the English Room though not in all schools are they developed to the same extent. There is still room for more activities, resources and creative assignments. Learning in the English Room increases the students' interest and motivation since each student finds activities that fit his level of mastery of the English language. Students' self - confidence increases and they are willing to devote time and effort to carry out assignments and projects. A remarkable percentage of students feel that they improved their language efficiency and are more interested in learning the language. The observations of the lessons and the interviews with the teachers clarified the fact that putting an emphasis on the process of the learning and on assignments rather than on achievements and tests contributes a lot to the students' feelings of confidence. It was found out that there is more cooperation between the students and the students and the teacher in the English Room.

The hypothesis about the interest raised by the variety of the computer activities and assignments was confirmed. Both students and teachers should use "WORD" and "POWER POINT" and audio and videocassettes to a larger extent for carrying out assignments,

The assumption that students who use the English Room don't have to use library services for their English studies was not confirmed. Books are borrowed from the school library and not from the English Room. It became clear that students don't read enough, therefore teachers and librarians should organize more activities that encourage reading.

The assumption that there is high correlation between the variables was confirmed. The findings of the quantitative research confirm that there is high positive correlation between the variables. The observations and the interviews with the teachers also proved the interaction between: variety of resources – interest – motivation – confidence – cooperation between students and students and teacher – initiative – positive approach to the English language. All of the above contribute to a pleasant atmosphere and learning environment and to the advancement in acquiring the language proficiencies.

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