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Comparative analysis of short-term intensive and long-term adaptive language teaching curriculum

Kısa Süreli Yoğun ve Uzun Vadeli Uyarlanabilir Dil Öğretimi Müfredatının Karşılaştırmalı Analizi

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Abstract

Teaching and learning a foreign language are challenging and time-consuming endeavors. Being proficient in a foreign language takes hard work for learners.

This qualitative research was conducted at Language Preparatory School (LPS) in Tishk International University (TIU), a private university in Erbil in Iraq where teachers currently follow a short-term intensive teaching program for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. To collect data, a survey was created and sent to 15 teachers at Tishk International University Language Preparatory School (TIULPS) through Google form. Three open-ended questions and five Likert-scale items were used in the qualitative research and subsequently the data was analyzed. According to research findings, it is suggested that EFL students in TIULPS should be taught in a long-term adaptive language teaching schedule. Therefore, there is an emergency to set up a new curriculum for language learners at language preparatory schools due to the allocated duration for proficiency level. These research findings can suggest a change in language teaching programs at education institutions at tertiary level in general.

Keywords: Curriculum, Language Preparatory School, Language Proficiency, Long-Term Adaptive Language Teaching Curriculum, Short-Term Intensive language Teaching Curriculum.

Özet

Yabancı dil öğretmek ve öğrenmek zor ve zaman alıcı çabalardır. Bu nitel araştırma, öğretmenlerin şu anda EFL (Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce) öğrencileri için kısa süreli yoğun bir öğretim programı takip ettiği Tishk Uluslararası Üniversitesi (TIU-Erbil / Irak'ta özel bir üniversite) Dil Hazırlık Okulu'nda (DHO) gerçekleştirilmiştir. Yabancı bir dilde yetkin olmak, öğrenciler ve öğretmenler için çok sıkı çalışma gerektirir. Bilgi toplamak için bir anket oluşturulmuş ve Google form aracılığıyla TIULPS' nin 15 hazırlık okulu öğretmenine gönderilmiştir. Nitel araştırmada üç açık uçlu soruya ve Likert ölçeğinde hazırlanmış beş varsayıma verilen cevaplar analiz edilmiştir. Bulgulara göre, TIULPS' deki EFL öğrencilerine uzun vadeli esnek bir dil öğretim programı takip edilmesi uygundur. Bu araştırma bulguları, genel olarak yükseköğretim düzeyindeki eğitim kurumlarında dil öğretim programlarında bir değişiklik olması gerekliliğini vurgular.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Müfredat, Dil Hazırlık Okulları, Dil Yeterliliği, Uzun süreli esnek dil öğretim programı, Kısa süreli yoğunlaştırılmış dil öğretim programı.

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Introduction

Foreign language teaching and learning is a process that requires the implementation of either short-term intensive (STI) or long-term adaptive (LTA) language teaching curriculum.

There is a difference between the study periods of the education systems of Iraq and European countries. The academic year in Iraq for sophomore, junior, and senior students in public and private universities starts earlier than first-year students; it usually starts on the first week of October. On the other hand, the academic year for first-year students commences after the ministry of higher education announces the state exam results publicly, which are generally finalized in the middle of September. After all, it takes students almost two months to submit the required documents and apply to universities. Students' education at universities starts in late November or early December.

There are two terms for first-year students, 14 weeks in the first term and 12 weeks in the second term. However, there is a considerable number of public holidays, such as Christmas and new year (1 week at least) and Newroz (2 weeks at least) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Because of the holidays mentioned above, students cannot have 26 weeks of education. As there is a curriculum mandated by the ministry of higher education to be executed for students at universities in these very short and intensive weeks, taking freshman English learners to the proficiency level is a big challenge for language teachers in a non-English speaking country. In the end, instructors get exhausted and nervous, and students usually complain about the intensity of the teaching program in LPS. Hence, it is advised that the teaching curriculum should be flexible or adaptive (Yildiz, 2019) for effective education.

In today's globalizing world, learning a foreign language, especially English, has become necessary in educational institutions (Kapukaya, 2020). For instance, the medium of instruction in Iraqi universities is English. Therefore, university students need to know English to study their majors successfully. Language students expect to achieve a degree of proficiency in communicating in a foreign language at an academic level (Daskan & Yildiz, 2020). Richard et al. as cited in Kapukaya (2020) claim that 10,000 hours of practice in any work is a must to reach a mastery level of a specific skill.

Proficiency Time for Learning a Language

It is unreasonable and impossible for a student to master English in a year (Adams & Jones, 2006). Language learning largely depends on three factors from the students' perspective: the student's attitude, the student's time spent on the language, and the student's attentiveness (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). In addition, learning a language in a limited time differs from nation to nation, from education system to education system and from person to person. It is a fact that learning a language takes time and effort, and consequently, how quickly one can learn a language depends on several variables: first, the language one wants to study, and then the level s/he aims to achieve (Schirber, 2013). If a person is born in a country where people are bilingual, that person may take the necessary steps quickly to learn another language. However, if only one language is the main spoken language in the area, then that may depend on the learner's skills and the teacher's teaching approach. Jackson and Kaplan (2001) argue that learning a foreign language takes between 400 and 2200 hours of study and much practice. The FSI (Foreign Service Institute) anticipates that learning a new language requires approximately 2,200 class hours, with at least half of that time being spent in immersion (Okura, 2016).

Short-Term Intensive Language Teaching Curriculum

The definition of a short-term program is to follow various activities to be implemented in a limited time. Hence, a short-term curriculum is where course materials are delivered over a short period compared to standard courses through compressed teaching formats (Karaksha et al., 2013). TIULPS has a short-term curriculum to follow between 22 or 26-week of language education due to the late beginning of the academic year in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In the short-term language teaching program, students take lessons in relevant classes to reach the desired level in a communicative environment. Courses are generally designed with various interesting and fast-paced activities to develop learners' reading and listening skills. Short-term language courses aim to help a learner to reach a certain level in a short time. One of the benefits of a short-term intensive curriculum is that the class size is comparatively smaller. Subsequently, more practice with fewer students allows teachers to devote more time to students and expose students to more language practice.

Long-Term Adaptive Language Teaching Curriculum

A long-term adaptive language teaching curriculum is designed to extend the educational period with more extracurricular activities. In this system, students are expected to spend less time in class, however, longer time out of class on language-oriented extracurricular activities (Yildiz, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a). In other words, learning and teaching occur long-term (Volodina et al., 2014). Learners in long-term adaptive language teaching programs are less busy than short-term program learners (Moran & Myringer, 2002). For instance, some private and semi-private international universities, such as the American University in Sulaymaniyah and Kurdistan Hewlêr University (UKH) in Erbil in Kurdistan, offer language-level assessment tests at the beginning of the academic year to students who will study their department courses in English. A long-term language teaching program of up to two years or 38 weeks is applied depending on the student's language level test. However, not only is this teaching period in those institutions long, but it is also intensive. Therefore, students may feel exhausted and burned out throughout the academic year. According to Fabio and Towey (2018), students' practice increases their concentration skills and affects their working memory, visual search abilities and cognitive flexibility in the long term. Throughout such a lengthy time frame, the students' progress in reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, motivation, self-esteem, and empathy becomes clearer. Students in the long-term adaptive language learning program tend to develop a greater sense of independence in their linguistic pursuits (Oxford, 2015). A student's academic success is a direct reflection

of his or her motivation and commitment to the course of study and the tasks at hand (Celik & Yildiz, 2017). The more they communicate and interact with people in a foreign language, the more successful they will be in comprehension and speaking.

Methodology

This study was conducted at TIULPS in Iraq, where students and teachers had a short-term intensive curriculum. It was experienced that exhaustion was inevitable in the middle of the academic year for both teachers and students. The main study point of the questionnaire was the proposal to change the teaching program (instead of following the short-term intensive program, switching to the long-term adaptive language teaching program) for EFL learners. The questions in the survey were administrated to the teachers at the LPS of the ELT department by Google form. The research included eight data chart figures, and the authors interpreted them.

Participants

The 15 participants in the survey were the LPS instructors of TIU. They responded to 8 survey questions in the research. There were five female and ten male respondents.

Four respondents were novice teachers between the ages of 21 and 30, and others were in the 31-40 age groups. The left was over the age of 41. Five teachers of them have been teaching English for about three years now. The others were categorized in the experienced group because they had been teaching English for over three years.

Table 1.
The number of male and female teachers

<i>Participants` Frequency in Terms of Gender</i>			
<i>Variable(s)</i>	<i>Option</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>33.3</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>66.6</i>
<i>Total</i>		<i>15</i>	<i>100</i>

Result and Discussion

The results of the instruments applied in this study are presented below.

Data Analysis

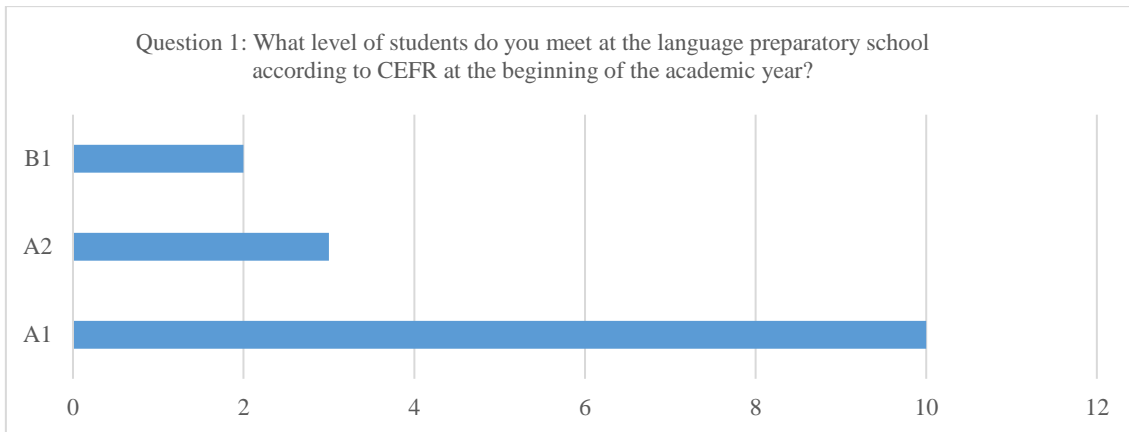


Figure 1. Prospective English Learners' Level in Language Classes.

Regarding the first question about the English level of students, most teachers responded that students who come to LPS are mostly at the A1 level because they could not pass the university's

proficiency exam to continue their studies directly at their departments. However, among students, some better learners could prefer to learn English from the basics.

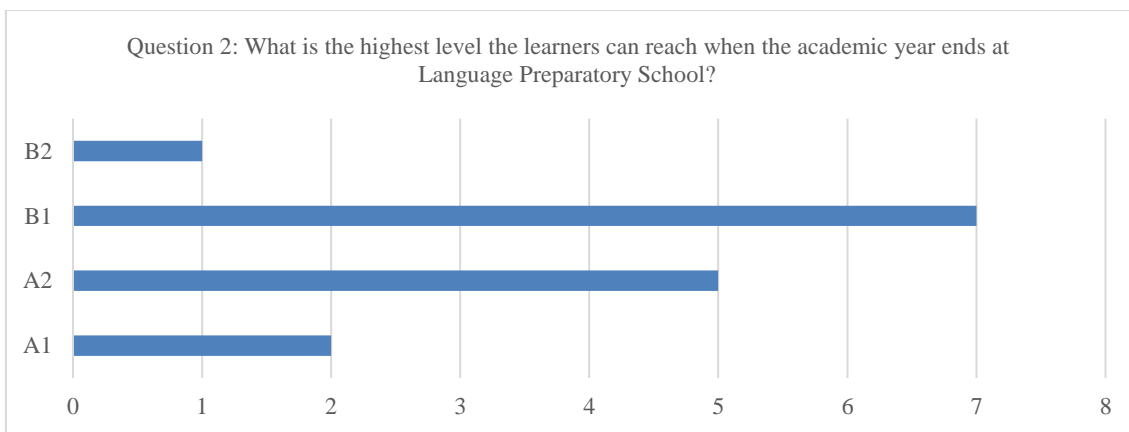


Figure 2. Learners' End Year Level of English.

According to figure 2, almost half of the teachers claim that the students who graduate from the LPS reach the B1 level. On the other hand, less than half of the teachers think that students need

to reach the expected level, and they are at the A2 level in their graduation, which is not enough to follow departmental subjects.

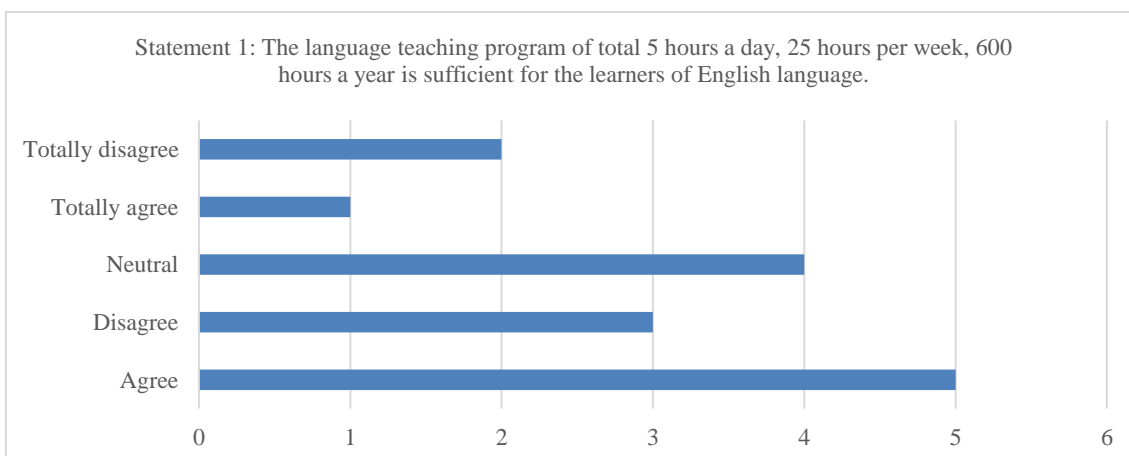


Figure 3. The sufficiency of the short-term language course.

Surprisingly, figure 3 shows that almost half of the teachers think the 600 hours of language learning period students receive in a year is

sufficient. On the other hand, some teachers think this language teaching schedule needs to be revised for EFL learners.

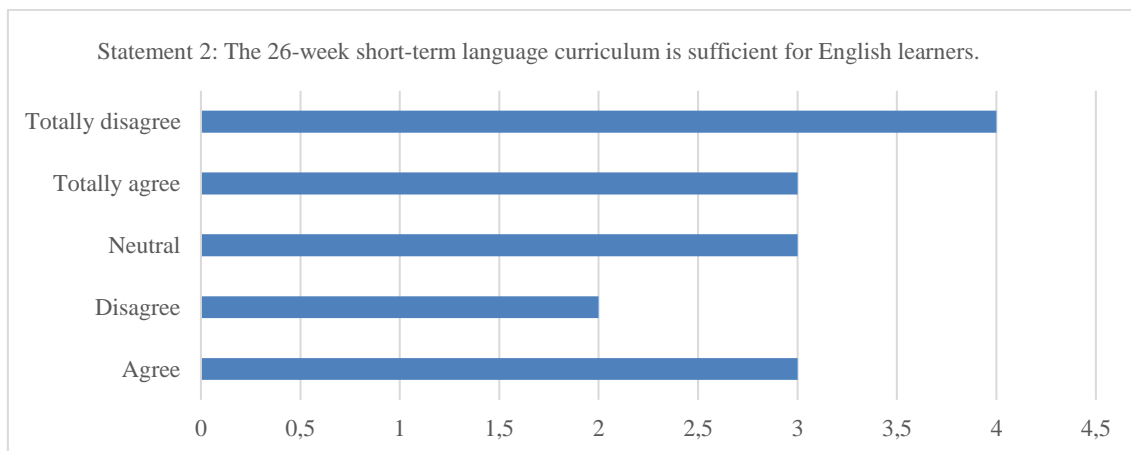


Figure 4. The 26-week short-term course sufficiency in LPS.

It is interpreted that half of the teachers think the 26 weeks of short-term language teaching received by the students is enough. On the other hand, the other half of the respondents think this

curriculum needs a change because of insufficient time to learn a foreign language in LPS.

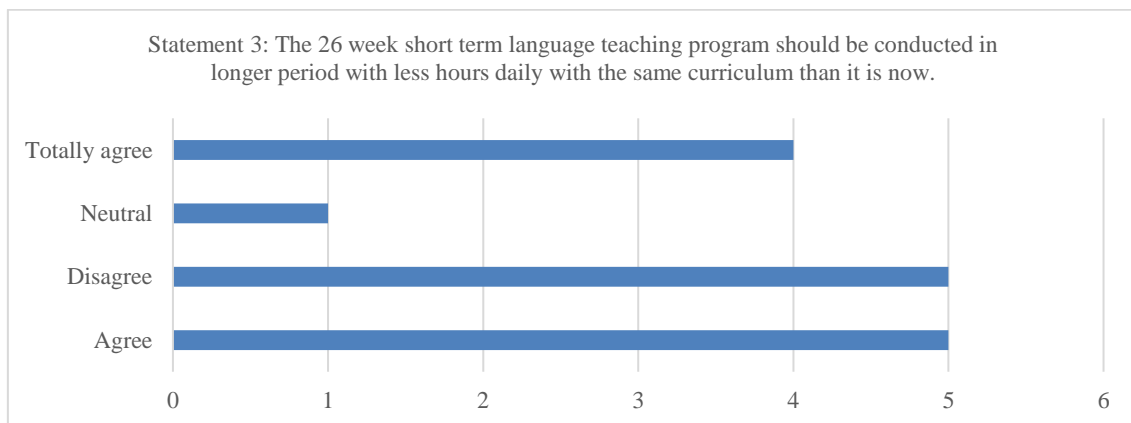


Figure 5. The length of the LPS education.

Most teachers think learners' language education should be expanded to longer weeks with fewer hours daily within the same curriculum.

However, less than half of the respondents think the program should stay the same.

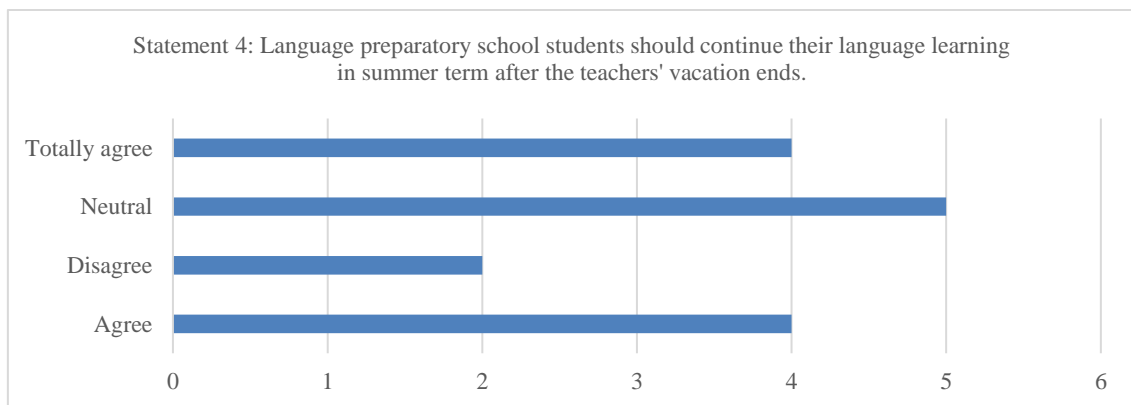


Figure 6. Education in summer term.

It is interpreted that almost all teachers think the language education the learners take should be expanded in the summer term.

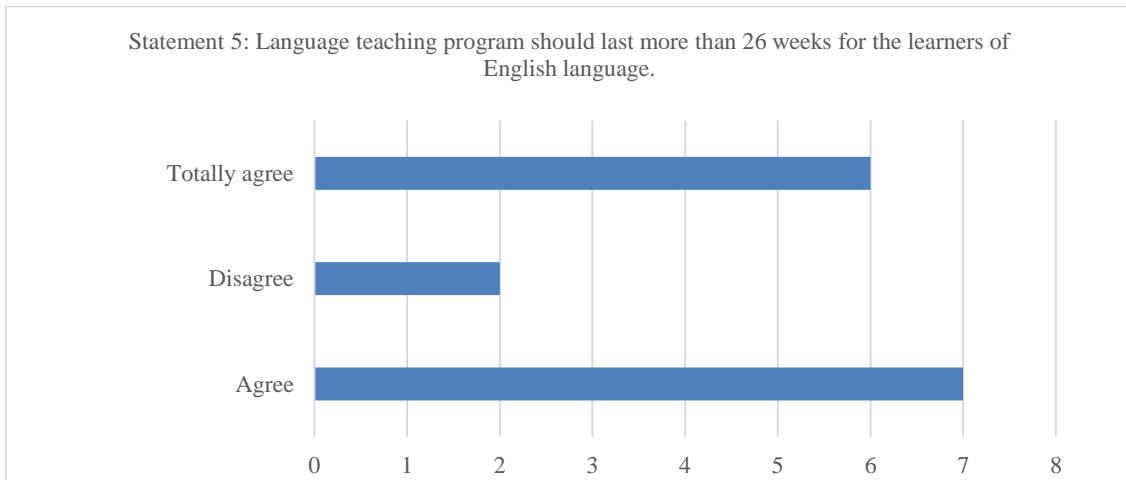


Figure 7. The Duration of the Language Teaching Program.

This part is significant because almost all teachers in LPS think the language course the learners take should be longer than it is now.

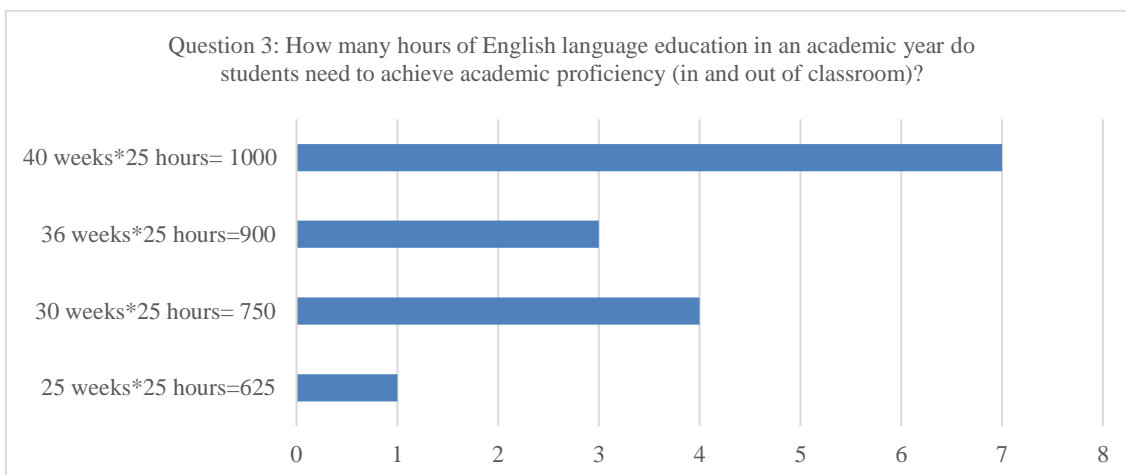


Figure 8. Reaching to academic proficiency.

Figure 8 explains that almost all teachers of LPS think the language course learners take is not enough for academic proficiency to study in their departments. Half of the teachers think students must have 1000 hours of exposition to the English language within and outside of school activities.

In this research, teachers working at TIULPS were asked to answer a google form statements through an online questionnaire about whether they preferred the intensive short-term or long-term adaptive curriculum. Based on the research findings, it has emerged that students who have chosen TIULPS to learn English as a foreign language should have a long-term adaptive language teaching curriculum. There was a significant correlation between the answers LPS

teachers responded to in the survey. The results for each Likert scale statement and open-ended question were formulated in interpreted graphs. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students are offered the opportunity to participate in a short-term intensive curriculum during their language education year at Tishk International University Language Preparatory School, so language teachers need a tremendous amount of time and effort to bring learners of English as a foreign language to the expected level of proficiency. According to research findings, the time it takes to become an expert in any field, a person needs about 10,000 hours of practice. Therefore, considering this fact, an updated curriculum should be arranged for foreign language learners studying in language preparatory schools. This research will be useful

for those who prepare language teaching programs in universities because it has been understood that the curriculum followed by private institutions needs some adjustments.

Conclusion

The difficulty of language teachers working in LPS is to teach students the English language in a limited time. Teaching English is the art of language teachers to transfer reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to students. Yildiz (2016b) argues that language instructors can provide students with language skills and ensure their oral and written communication at the desired level of success.

Teaching and learning a foreign language is a process, not a product. According to findings, language teaching to EFL students at LPS should include at least 40 weeks to reach academic proficiency. Implementing the language teaching curriculum requires the hard work, patience, and cooperation of staff in language schools. Based on the data from the survey, it was understood that language learners should spend more than 625 hours in general English. This learning process should span a period longer than the 26-week academic year. Students should be encouraged to participate in English-based extracurricular activities inside and outside the school. Therefore, language-based extracurricular activities and a long-term adaptive language teaching program are recommended for students who wish to improve their English knowledge at the end of the academic year.

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