Investigating the Effectiveness of English Language Curriculum of Language Institutes in the City of Isfahan

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of English language curriculum of language institutes in the city of Isfahan from lecturers and learners' perspective. In order to this, a sample of 185 members (including 89 learners and 96 lecturers) has been selected from language institutes in the city of Isfahan through clarified sampling method. In order to investigate face and content validity of the questionnaire, the expert's of English language curriculum have been asked to review the questionnaire and modify it. The reliability of the questionnaire has been measured through Cronbachs' Alpha Coefficient. The coefficient was 0.90 for our questionnaire by which reliability of the questionnaire has been confirmed. The research data has been analyzed through both descriptive statistics (including frequencies, percentages, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (including one sample t-test, Pearson correlation coefficient, Kolmogorov-Smirinov, two sample t-test, one-way analysis of variance, and Levin test) have been employed. The results of this study revealed that the extent of English language curriculum was more than average level. In other words, English language curriculum was effective from lecturers and learners' perspective.

Keywords: Evaluation, Goals, Curriculum, Teaching-learning Process, Content

1.   Introduction

Language is a diversified instrument because of different nations and races. Human needs science and using the scientific, technical, and cultural outcomes of others. The use of such outcomes require favorable common instrument by which all people can communicate each other in both dialogue and printed forms. On the other hand, the communicational tools transformour comprehensive world to a tiny hamlet in which all people communicate each other and share their thoughts, information, and knowledge. It is should be remembered that the common language of such communication is English. Since this language is considered as a foreign language in Iran, it is usually is learned in schools and other educational institutes. Indeed, the effective education of English language has been considered as a main interest of educational planning officers during past years. For this purpose, a large part of energies and capitals are allocated for this area every year. This is why that the authors of this paper were motivated to investigate the effectiveness of English Language curriculum in language institutes.

In order to investigate the effectiveness of English Language curriculum in the language institutes, effectiveness of four components of English Language curriculum (including goals, content, teaching-learning process, and evaluation) have been studied from lecturers and learners of English language in the city of Isfahan. The results of this can be used for solve the potential problems of this area. Indeed, the present conditions of English Language curriculum and also some of the global experiences and approaches will be investigated and finally some empirical suggestions will be presented.

Review of literature

Educational plan is considered as a plan or map of learning which consists of some main and secondary components. The main components refer to the important effective factors on learning. The first main component is goal. The learning process cannot be successful without this component. The goal is so important in curriculum that everybody cannot decide in none of curriculum planning process. The content is the second component. Undoubtedly, it is necessary to teach an educational content in order to achieve his/her goal. On the other hand, learning cannot be done without content. The reason is that efficiency and effectiveness of learning depends on the content seriously. The method is the third component. It is should be noted that the best contents cannot be learned without education. It is the teaching method by which the concepts will be understood, skills will be achieved, and values will be internalized. As a result, as much as the method appropriate, learning will be more effective. Indeed, theory can be transformed to practices through teaching methods. On the other hand, implementation of educational planners' decisions depends on the teaching methods. The evaluation is the fourth component. Lack of knowledge of learning conditions and results among planners, teachers, and learners are the main defections of curriculum planning. However, recognition of learning goal achievement, recognition of learning process issues and problems, and recognition of this process strengths and weaknesses are the main instruments of learning management. Curriculum has other components and factors which are determined based

on the main components. The secondary components are effective on the quality of main components. These include images, photos, tables, regulations, and other designs which influence main components and reinforce learning process (Maleki, 2009).

Investigating the goals of English Language Curriculum

Finocchiar (1973) pointed out that the main goal of language learning is creating effective communication and cultural understanding. It is should be remembered that the goals of language learning is similar across the world. Stern (1992) suggested four goals of English Language learning including performance goals, cognitive goals, affective goals, and transitional goals. Performance goals include ability in frame and understanding it (listening, speaking, and reading) or understanding especial language behaviors. Cognitive goals refer to understanding the language culture. Affective goals refer to achieving positive attitude and feeling toward language and achieving confidence in using language. Finally, transitional goals include learning how to learn. This means that the person be able to use his/her learning in new situations. It can be said that the goals not only is to investigate the knowledge and skills achievement, but also develop personal knowledge.

The criteria of selecting contents in English Language

There are several criteria in selecting vocabulary, meaning, and style components in the English Language Books that some of them have been presented in this section such as purpose of learning foreign language, age, and needs of learner, language type (British English or American English), learning process, results of new researches in foreign language teaching, time and place of foreign language learning, the results of grammar errors analysis, mental and physical preparation of learner, results of researches in learning theories, results of researches in foreign language learning, viewpoints of English Language teachers and experts.

Teaching-learning process

It is necessary that the learner enters to the teaching-learning activities so that be able to learn language forms in foreign language teaching. Understanding every language is a hierarchical construct which is an un-deliberate task. Generally, there are three steps in the skills learning process. These include:

- Learning singular contents
- Combining new learned contents with others
- Using new learned contends in aun-deliberate manner

This process is used in every effort of teaching foreign language. This means that the learner should be familiar with curriculum content, relate it to his/her previous findings, and finally pave the ground for doing them in action. In any educational book, we can see that these steps have inter-relationship with each other. The following steps can be seen in the educational learning.

1. **Presentation**: teacher presents the curriculum and describes them.
2. **Repetition**: teacher forces learner to repeat curriculum contents and then relate it to his/her previous learning.
3. **Application**: teacher paves the ground for learner to apply his/her learning in practice (Leyons, 1990).

Evaluation of educational achievement in English Language curriculum

How evaluation is done? There are several methods for evaluating English Language curriculum. The most important method is teacher's evaluation (observing learners in classroom). Indeed, this method attempts to observe what learners do in action and how do they activities. If learners have serious problems and difficulties in some of the homework, the appropriateness of goal or activities will be questionable. Teacher also may pave the ground for learners to indicate their viewpoints about certain aspects of educational period. Teacher's attention to the plan feedback and self-evaluation play an important role in the evaluation.

There is a significant relationship between education and evaluation so much that it is not possible to understand education without evaluation and vice versa. Evaluation in the foreign language teaching is a practical and constructive solution by which learner is provided with different learning opportunities. The results of a study which has been done by educational and cultural assistance of Cyprus and British Council revealed that the goals of different levels can be recognized in four main skills. The results of this study also indicated that it is necessary to define performance standards for each of the areas every year. Mahmodi (1990) studied defections in the goals of English Language teaching in guidance and high schools. He found that the grammar is the main goal rather the main skills. In addition, he found that grammar teaching was not effective and the main skills of grammar (such as deep perception, analysis, application, and creativity of learners) have not been considered in educational periods. Anderson (1993) studied group discussion in English Language Teaching among 120 Chines teachers and professors. He found that group discussion in English Language has the most efficiency and also learner's motivation and ability play the most important role in educational periods. McGuire (1992) studied the participative learning in English Language learning in Japan. He also examined the role of teachers and their correct techniques in educational periods among 42 teachers and students. The results of this study revealed that some of the defections of English Language leaning of this country are related teaching method. Kamurul (2004) found that directing the teaching method toward inappropriate evaluation and evaluative methods is one of the main obstacles in achieving predetermined goals and standards.

2.   Research questions

This study has been aimed to answer the following questions from lecturers and learners' perspective:
1. To what extent the goals of English Language curriculum have been achieved in English Language institutes in the city of Isfahan?
2. To what extent the contents of English Language curriculum were effective in achieving the goals of English Language institutes in the city of Isfahan?
3. Is there any consistency between teaching-learning process of English Language curriculum in English Language institutes in the city of Isfahan?
4. To what extent the main criteria of English Language curriculum have been considered in English Language institutes in the city of Isfahan?
5. Is there any significant relationship between research variables (goals, content, teaching-learning process, and evaluation) from lectures' perspective?
6. Is there any significant relationship between research variables (goals, content, teaching-learning process, and evaluation) from lectures' perspective?

3.   Research methodology

The present study is a survey in which a questionnaire with 49 items has been employed for collecting the research data. The questionnaire has been developed in five-point Likert scale. It is should be remembered that the score of 3 is an acceptable level in this study. The statistical population of this study includes lectures and learners of primary, interchange, and advanced levels of English Language Leaning periods in English Language Institutes in the city of Isfahan in 2011-2012 academic years. In order to select the sample members, clarified sampling method has been used. A sample of 89 lectures and 96 learners has been selected from that population. The questionnaire has been reviewed and modified by English Language Learning lectures and thereby its validity has been confirmed. Cronbachs' Alpha Coefficient has been employed for examining reliability of the questionnaire. The coefficient was 0.90 for questionnaire that confirms reliability of the questionnaire. In order to analyze the research data and test the research hypotheses, both descriptive and inferential statistics have been used in the SPSS.

4.   Findings

The findings of this study have been presented in this section. The first question of this study claims that to what extent the goals of English Language curriculum have been achieved in English Language institutes in the city of Isfahan?

Table 1: the averages and standard deviation of English Language curriculum goals

Variables	Frequency	Average	Standard deviation
Learners	93	3.647	0.629
Lectures	92	3.702	0.632

Table 2: the results of t-test

The results of t-test	Static	Df	Sig	Confident distance	
				Low level	High level
Learners	9.918	92	0.000	0.518	0.777
Lectures	10.652	91	0.000	0.571	0.833

The results of this test revealed that average of English Language curriculum goals is more than 3.00 significantly. In other words, the status of English Language curriculum was consistent with needs of learners and a significant consistency exists between lectures and learners' viewpoint.

The second question of this study claims that to what extent the contents of English Language curriculum were effective in achieving the goals of English Language institutes in the city of Isfahan? The results of this question have been presented in tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: the averages and standard deviation of English Language curriculum content

Variables	Frequency	Average	Standard deviation
Learners	93	3.733	0.645
Lectures	91	3.692	0.628

Table 4: the results of t-test

The results of t-test	Static	df	Sig	Confident distance	
				Low level	High level
Learners	10.944	92	0.000	0.6	0.866
Lectures	10.507	90	0.000	0.561	0.823

The results of this test revealed that average of English Language curriculum contents is more than 3.00 significantly. In other words, the English language curriculum was effective on achieving educational goals and

needs of learners and two groups of respondents (lectures and learners) had consistency in this area.

It has been claimed in the third question of this study that is there any consistency between teaching-learning processes of English Language curriculum in English Language institutes in the city of Isfahan? The results of this question have been presented in tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: the averages and standard deviation of English Language teaching-learning process

Variables	Frequency	Average	Standard deviation
Students	94	3.198	0.914
Learners	97	3.748	0.714
Lectures	80	3.262	0.831
Teachers of school	90	3.751	0.627

Table 6: the results of t-test

The results of t-test	Static	df	Sig	Confident distance	
				Low level	High level
Learners	10.311	96	0.000	0.603	0.891
Lectures	11.366	89	0.000	0.619	0.882

The results of this test revealed that average of teaching-learning process is more than 3.00 significantly. In other words teaching-learning process was effective on the achievement of learners' educational needs from both learners and lectures' view. On the other hand, a significant consistency exists between lectures and learners' viewpoint.

The third question of this study indicates that to what extent the main criteria of English Language curriculum have been considered in English Language institutes in the city of Isfahan? The results of this question have been presented in tables 7 and 8.

Table 7: the averages and standard deviation of English Language performance evaluation

Variables	Frequency	Average	Standard deviation
Learners	97	3.744	0.738
Lectures	90	3.626	0.691

Table 8: the results of t-test

The results of t-test	Static	df	Sig	Confident distance	
				Low level	High level
Learners	9.922	96	0.000	0.595	0.893
Lectures	8.593	89	0.000	0.481	0.771

The results of this test revealed that average of English Language performance evaluation is more than 3.00 significantly. In other words English Language performance evaluation was effective on the achievement of learners' educational needs from both learners and lectures' view. On the other hand, a significant consistency exists between lectures and learners' viewpoint.

The fourth question of this study claims that is there any significant relationship between research variables (goals, content, teaching-learning process, and evaluation) from lectures' perspective? The results of this question have been presented in table 9 and 10.

Table 9: the results of the relationship between curriculum plan contents from learners' perspective

		The consistency between English Language curriculum goals and leaners' needs	The effect of English Language curriculum content on the educational goals and leaners' needs	The effectiveness of teaching-learning process in educational goals achievement	The effectiveness of performance evaluation in educational goals achievement
The consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs	**Pearson correlation**	1	0.822	0.717	0.806
	Sig		0.000	0.000	0.000
	Frequency	93	93	93	93
The effect of English Language curriculum content on the educational goals and learners' needs	**Pearson correlation**	0.822	1	0.789	0.773
	Sig	0.000		0.000	0.000
	Frequency	93	93	93	93
The effectiveness of teaching-learning process in educational goals achievement	**Pearson correlation**	0.717	0.789	1	0.814
	Sig	0.000	0.000		0.000
	Frequency	93	93	97	97
The effectiveness of performance evaluation in educational goals achievement	**Pearson correlation**	0.806	0.773	0.814	1
	Sig		0.000	0.000	0.000
	Frequency	93	93	97	97

The results of table revealed that there is a significant relationship between the consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs, the effect of English Language curriculum content on the educational goals and learners' needs, the effectiveness of teaching-learning process in educational goals achievement, and the effectiveness of performance evaluation in educational goals achievement from lectures' perspective.. As a result, change in each of the variables results in other variables. The strongest relationship was between the consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs and the effect of English Language curriculum content on the educational goals and learners' needs. On the other hand, the weakest relationship was between the consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs and the effectiveness of teaching-learning process in educational goals achievement.

The sixth question of this study indicates that is there any significant relationship between research variables (goals, content, teaching-learning process, and evaluation) from lectures' perspective? The results of this question have been presented in table 10.

Table 10: the results of the relationship between curriculum plan contents from lectures' perspective

		The consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs	The effect of English Language curriculum content on the educational goals and learners' needs	The effectiveness of teaching-learning process in educational goals achievement	The effectiveness of performance evaluation in educational goals achievement
The consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs	**Pearson correlation**	1	0.740	0.614	0.343
	Sig		0.000	0.000	0.001
	Frequency	92	91	90	90
The effect of English Language curriculum content on the educational goals and learners' needs	**Pearson correlation**	0.740	1	0.789	0.519
	Sig	0.000		0.000	0.000
	Frequency	91	91	90	90
The effectiveness of teaching-learning process in educational goals achievement	**Pearson correlation**	0.614	0.789	1	0.679
	Sig	0.000	0.000		0.000
	Frequency	90	90	90	90
The effectiveness of performance evaluation in educational goals achievement	**Pearson correlation**	0.343	0.519	0.679	1
	Sig		0.001	0.000	0.000
	Frequency	90	90	90	90

The results of table revealed that there is a significant relationship between the consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs, the effect of English Language curriculum content on the educational goals and learners' needs, the effectiveness of teaching-learning process in educational goals achievement, and the effectiveness of performance evaluation in educational goals achievement from learners' perspective. As a result, change in each of the variables results in other variables. The strongest relationship was between the consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs and the effectiveness of teaching-learning process in educational goals achievement. On the other hand, the weakest relationship was between the consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs and the effectiveness of performance evaluation in educational goals achievement.

With respect to this finding that the averages of both learners and lectures' viewpoint were more than moderate level, it can be said that the components of English language curriculum were effective in the English language institutes.

Table 11: the average of respondents' viewpoint in terms of English language curriculum content

Variables	Goals	Content	Teaching-learning process	Evaluation
Learners	3.20	3.60	3.50	3.74
Lectures	3.30	3.70	3.69	3.75

Table 12: the effectiveness of English language curriculum

English language curriculum effectiveness	From learners' viewpoint	From lectures' viewpoint
The consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs	Moderate	Moderate
The effect of English Language curriculum content on the educational goals and learners' needs	Effective	Effective
The effectiveness of teaching-learning process in educational goals achievement	Effective	Effective
The effectiveness of performance evaluation in educational goals achievement	Effective	Effective

Table 13: the results of the relationship between English language curriculum contents

Type and extent of the relationship between different groups		The consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs	The effect of English Language curriculum content on the educational goals and learners' needs	The effectiveness of performance evaluation in educational goals achievement
The consistency between English Language curriculum goals and learners' needs	**Lectures**	Direct and strong	Direct and strong	Direct and strong
	Learners	Direct and strong	Direct and relatively strong	Direct and relatively weak
The effect of English Language curriculum content on the educational goals and learners' needs	**Lectures**		Direct and strong	Direct and strong
	Learners		Direct and strong	Direct and moderate
The effectiveness of teaching-learning process in educational goals achievement	**Lectures**			Direct and strong
	Learners			Direct and relatively strong
The effectiveness of performance evaluation in educational goals achievement	**Lectures**			Direct and strong
	Learners			Direct and strong

5.   Discussion and conclusion

The results of this study revealed that the goals of English language curriculum have been achieved relatively in the English language learning institutes in the city of Isfahan. The results of our study have consistency with findings of Birjandi (1986). He found that when learning is actualized for learner that he/she can achieve educational goals, needs, and wants through learning process. He pointed out that the goal of English language curriculum should be defined and also it must have consistency with learners' expectations. It can be said about content that it is considered as one of the main educational contents of English language curriculum. The results of examining and analyzing learners and lectures' viewpoints revealed that there is a consistency between English language curriculum content and goals of English language curriculum. The results of our study are consistent with findings of Mahmodi (1995). He found that style and content of new English language books, which has been developed based on different facilities and limitations, are consistent with educational needs. On the other hand, the results of other studies revealed that the time of English language curriculum of schools has not good attraction. However, English language institutes define sufficient time for educational books in order to

solve such problems. Another part of the results of our study revealed that teaching-learning process has good consistency with goals of English language curriculum. McGuire (1992) found that teaching method English language curriculum is one of the main problems of English language curriculum. Indeed, evaluation of English language curriculum is a practical and constructive solution which provides learners with different opportunities. He also found that evaluation methods of educational achievement had good consistency with English language curriculum goals. The results of the study which has been done by Ortiz (2001) supported findings of our study. He found that continuous and systematic evaluation is the effective factor on predetermined English language curriculum goals. Based on the findings of this study, the following empirical suggestions can be developed. Based on the level of scientific advance in Iran and the need of our society to contact foreign people, it is suggested that a sound and comprehensive examination should be done and also the goals of English language curriculum should be selected based on the more actual needs. On the other hand, learners participate in the group discussions in which they have more opportunities for practice speaking skills. Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that the contents of English language curriculum should be reviewed and modified. Also it is suggested that written evaluation, which is based on the grammar and standard test, be done for measuring actual knowledge of learner. Since several modifications have been done in developed countries in terms of English language curriculum, it is necessary to use their beneficial experiences and policies in developing English language curriculum contents.

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