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มหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์

An Experiment in the Effectiveness of “Crash Program” in English at Kasetsart University

Niphon Kantasewi¹

Department of English, Kasetsart University

An average Thai student, upon entering a university, has been taught English for eight years. The level of English proficiency, however, is surprisingly low in all aspects, namely, writing, reading, speaking and listening. The student obviously has been delayed too long in the inefficient process of learning. The situation is worsened when he is taught during the secondary school years by incompetent and poorly qualified teachers of English.

Inherent problems. Problem in teaching English at Kasetsart University are numerous. To mention only a few of the most important ones, they are as follows:

1. An extremely wide range of students' (a) background knowledge in English, (b) English proficiency, and (c) attitude toward learning the language.
2. A serious shortage of highly qualified teachers.

3. An excessively high ratio of students to teacher (100:1).

Attempts have been made to minimize the difficulties caused by the aforementioned problems since the latter are almost administratively impossible to solve. The outcomes, hitherto, have not been very satisfactory.

It is the investigator's opinion that language learning should be as intensive and integrated as possible if the learner is expected to retain his interest and enthusiasm and to be proficient in the language. He must be guided in the right direction and encouraged to think in, listen to, and use, the language at all times.

A summer vacation period seems to offer an opportunity to students interested in undergoing such an intensive program. During such time they usually do not have any other subjects to worry about, and thus, can devote all their time to the study and drills.

1. Presently Chairman, Department of Social Science, Kasetsart University.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Intensive approach. At a university, the student should be offered a kind of English teaching program that is short and intensive in nature. He has, in his secondary education, acquired much of the fundamentals of the language, particularly vocabulary and grammar. He should, then, be given ample opportunities to drill more intensively and put the knowledge to use in a practical manner and in a more appropriate context.

The "natural" method. It is a kind of language learning whereby a learner has day-by-day contact with the speakers of the new language. The unique advantage of this method is that the learner is completely immersed in the new language and has abundant opportunity to practice it all day every day, on both the reception and production level. As pointed out by Van Syoc (1), from his "survey of some foreign language teaching methods", that the "natural" method is the most effective one. He further added that persons who combine the "natural" method with instruction from a competent teacher often progress very rapidly in learning the new language.

The "crash program" in English. This is an approach to learning English whereby the learner attempts to increase his English proficiency in all aspects through the "natural" method in a very intensive manner and in conjunction with well-organized classroom instruction.

The conventional method. The conventional method referred to here is the kind of language teaching and learning program whereby the learner speaks, writes, and drills in grammar, for about 4 to 10 hours a week. The student is assigned to read outside class but has no daily contact other than in class with a native speaker of the language.

Previous related studies. Three experiments were informally conducted in 1964 as reported in *TIME* magazine (2,3). The first experiment was carried out in Tokyo, Japan, using English. The second and third were done in California and Maryland, U.S.A. The language used was Chinese. All three experiments, however, were not systematically organized and conducted. No report of objective evaluation was empirically made.

THE STATEMENTS OF PROBLEM

Hypothesis. It is hypothesized that the "crash program" in English approach as above-described is more effective as a means to increase the student's proficiency in the language than that commonly and conventionally practiced in the regular summer session or semester on the basis of the criterion test.

Objective. The primary objective of this study is two fold:

- (a) To determine the effectiveness of the "crash program" as an approach to teaching and learning English.

- (b) To compare the effectiveness of the "crash program" approach with that of the conventional approach.

PROCEDURE

Selection of students. For the experimental group, sixty students were selected on the following bases:

- (a) They must be regular students presently enrolled in any of the University's undergraduate programs.
- (b) They must have maintained an average grade of 75 percent in all subjects taken up to the end of the semester prior to the experiment.

The students in the conventional group were randomly selected from those who enrolled in English courses during the 1965 summer session.

Length of time. The experimental group spent six weeks during the summer of 1965 learning English by the crash program approach.

The conventional group, on the other hand, spent six weeks during the same summer learning English in their respective summer English courses and three and a half months in their Fall semester English courses.

The experimental group had four hours a day of classroom instruction in a five-day week. Altogether they had 110 hours of instruction conducted in class.

The conventional group, however, had two hours a day of classroom in-

struction in a five-day week during the summer and four hours a week during the Fall semester that followed. This also amounted to 110 hours of learning in class.

Teaching materials. No special textbooks or reading materials were prescribed for either group. Teachers of both groups were free to select and use whatever each considered appropriate for the students in each group. Furthermore, in each group, the subgroups chose and used different materials.

However, while the students in the experimental group were not assigned any external reading but had constant contact with teachers, each subgroup in the conventional group prescribed its students to read a book outside class.

Methods and treatments.

- (a) Classes of the experimental group were conducted by twelve American Peace Corps Volunteers who each specialized in one of the four subjects, namely, reading, writing, grammar and speech. This approach is sometimes referred to as "team teaching". Students in this group were encouraged to speak and use English outside class among themselves and with their teachers who also lived with them in the dormitories. Activities were arranged for the students to use the language while playing in the afternoon and participating in the evening programs.

- (b) The conventional group was taught by either American or Thai teachers. The medium of instruction was entirely English. Thai language was used by the Thai teachers only when extremely necessary. Each teachers taught all four phases of English teaching, namely, reading, writing, grammar and speech. As conventionally practiced, the teachers and the students had almost no contact outside class. The students, however, were encouraged to speak English at all time but neither enforcement measure or any special activities were arranged for such purposes.

Evaluation and measurement.

- (a) **A criterion test.** A test consisting of two parts, objective and essay, was developed and pre-tested before being administered to the students in the study. The objective part consisted of 150 items covering the essential aspects of language learning skills, namely, grammar, stress, pronunciation, intonation, reading comprehension, aural comprehension, writing and vocabulary.

The other part was the essay type requiring the students to write about 250 words on a certain topic. The validity coefficient of the test as determined by comparing with the achievement tests taken by the students in the various English

courses was found to be 0.65. Its reliability coefficient as determined by the Kuder-Richardson Formula No. 20 was found to be 0.91.

- (b) **Administration of the test.** The test was administered twice to each of the students in both groups; the first was given just prior to the start of the experiment, the second at the conclusion of the program (for the experimental group), and at the end of the third month in the Fall semester for the conventional group.
- (c) **Analysis of the data.** The scores on the test administered twice to both groups were computed. The differences(gain) between the pre-test and post-test scores were obtained for the two groups and were compared. The significance of the differences at the .05 level was consequently determined.

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

Homogeneity of the two groups.

In spite of the fact that the students in the experimental group were not randomly selected as in the case of the conventional group, the variances of the two groups were found to be not significantly different at .05 level, as shown in Table 1.

It could be assumed that the subjects in the two groups were statistically homogeneous.

Comparison of the scores. The t-test was employed to determine the significance of the criterion test scores made by the students in the experimental and conventional groups. The gains were

Table 1. *Standard deviation of the experimental and conventional groups*

Measure	Standard Deviations	
	Experimental	Conventional
Pre-test	13.0	14.6
Post-test	12.4	14.0

obtained by subtracting the pre-test score of each students from his post-test score.

It may be observed that the scores on the pre-test which was designed to determine the students' initial knowledge of English prior to the experiment were employed both as the covariate in

the statistical treatment and the subject matter control on individual differences.

It was justified then that the gains in scores on the criterion test could be compared so as to determine the superiority of either of the two groups in their performance.

Table 2. *Comparison of the gains in scores on the criterion test made by both groups*

Groups in Comparison	No. of Students	Mean Test Scores			
		Pre-test	Post-test	Gain	Significance
Experimental	60	118	133	15	**
Conventional	298	116	125	9	**

The difference in the gains on the criterion test administered twice to the two groups, as shown in Table 2, was 6. By the t-test, the t value of the difference was found to be 1.26 which is not significant at .05 level. The hypothesis of equal gain scores made by the experimental and conventional groups was not rejected; that is, the differences in treatment performance on the basis of the criterion test scores were to be attributable to chance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The nonsignificant difference, which was the result of the t-test analysis in comparing the gains in the scores on the criterion test made by the students in the experimental (crash program) group and the conventional group, indicates that the intensive approach to

English teaching requiring only six weeks during the summer was as effective as the conventional approach wherein the teaching was conducted at the frequency of eight hours a week during the six-week summer session and of four hours a week for three and a half months extended into the following Fall term.

One must bear in mind, however, that there are many aspects of language learning which are less tangible and do not conveniently lend themselves to such objective measurement and comparison. Among them are the ability to comprehend spoken language and to express oneself in actual daily situations, and the attitude toward the learning and teaching of the language. Furthermore, no single test has, hitherto, been unequivocally accepted as being satisfac-

torily valid and reliable in measuring such attributes. The lack of precise and accurate measuring instruments in such a field of social sciences as language teaching has always been one of the most serious setback in research and experimentation in this field.

It was obvious, as further observed by many disinterested persons, that the experimental (crash program) group were much improved in all aspects of the language proficiency.

The investigator and his colleagues² are convinced by this study that language learning by such an intensive approach is the most effective considering the time, efforts, and expenses spent, and should be practiced where feasible.

As regards the attitude matter, a questionnaire was developed and administered to the students in the experimental group so as to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and their attitude toward the teaching approach. The findings from the evaluation were very encouraging as most of the students expressed their desire to join a teaching program again next summer and that the "crash program in English" should be continued every year.

REFERENCES

1. Van Syoc, W. Bryoe. 1963.
Methods of teaching English as a foreign language. Social Science Association of Thailand press, Bangkok.
2. Time, February, 1964.
3. ———, July, 1964.

2. Among them was Miss Carol Monlux, PCV IX, who was responsible for the development of the criterion test and the preparation of the teaching materials used in the experimental group, and the major part of the operation of the crash program.