UNIVERSITATEA BABEŞ-BOLYAI CLUJ-NAPOCA

FACULTATEA DE LITERE

SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

Improving Reading and English Reading Comprehension for Mature Adult Non-Reader/Weak Learner Students in the 30 Plus Pre-Academic Preparatory Program

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2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS OF THE SUMMARY

Keywords	11
Structure of the Thesis	12
Introduction	14
Research Design	18
Methodology	19
Findings	23
Discussion	26
Conclusions	29
Contribution to Knowledge	32
Further Research	32
References	34

TABLE OF CONTENTS OF THE THESIS

ABSTRACT	viii
KEYWORDS	ix
GLOSSARY	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Aims and focus of this study	1
1.2 The Research Aims	3
1.3 Research Questions	3
1.4 English Curriculum Ministry of Education 2013	4
1.5 Background for Israeli School System	6
1.6 Gap in Knowledge	7
1.7 Background to the Study	8
1.8 Pilot Study	8
1.9 Rationale for the Research	11
1.10 The Importance of English Reading Comprehension in Academia	13
1.11 Israel's Two Official Languages	14
1.12 The Conceptual Framework of the Mature Adult Students in the 30 Plus Preparatory Program	16
1.13 The Focus Groups	17
1.14 Dyslexic Mature Adult Students	20
1.15 Personal Teaching Philosophy	28
1.16 Affective Factors in Adult Learning	29
1.17 Summary of Teacher Authority Bases	32

1.18 The Focus of the Study 36

1.19 Informal Diagnostic Evaluation 45

1.20 The Structure of the Thesis 48

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW 50

2.1 Second Learning Acquisition 52

2.1i The Importance of Phonemic Awareness 53

2.1ii Phonetics/Phonology 54

2.1iii The Strong Learner 59

2.1iv The Weak Learner 61

2.1v Writing 68

2.1vi Vocabulary Acquisition 71

2.1vii Grammar in Language Learning 77

2.1viii Exposure and Schema 80

2.1ix Speaking 82

2.1x Reading Comprehension 82

2.2 Teaching Strategies for Reading Instruction 84

2.3 Adult Language Learning 87

2.3i Motivation 92

2.3ii Aptitude 94

2.3iv Brain Plasticity in Adults 98

2.4 Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) 99

2.5 Affective Factors in Adult Learning 106

2.6 Adult Needs Analysis 113

2.7 Preparation of the Program for Non/Weak Reader – 114

The Hickey Multisensory Teaching Methodology
2.8 Implementation of the Hickey Program 117
2.9 Perspectives on English Language Instruction 122
2.10 Reading 129
2.10i Reading Comprehension Strategies 135
2.10ii English Teaching Methodologies 140
2.11 Schema in Reading Comprehension 145
2.12 Preparation of a Reading Comprehension Activity 147
2.13 Reading Fluency 154
2.14 Vocabulary Enrichment 156
2.15 SUMMARY 158
CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 160
3.1 The Focus of the Research 160
3.2 The Site 161
3.3 The Research Design 164
3.4 Action Research 169
3.5 The Case Study 170
3.6 Data Collection Tools 172
3.7 Data Analysis 184
3.8 Triangulation 184
3.9 Bias 185
3.10 Ethics 186
3.11 Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability 189
3.12 The Researcher 191
3.13 SUMMARY 192

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS 193

4.1 Main Findings 193

4.2 Reflective Diaries – Students and Teacher 194

4.3 The Teacher 196

4.4 Interviews 197

4.5 Learner Empowerment 201

4.6 Findings Emerging From The MAS' Self-Assessment 203

4.6i Students' Responses Re Enjoyed Learning English 204

4.6ii Findings relating to MAS Expectations from the Teacher 205

4.6iii Findings emerging from MAS Expectations of the Teacher - 6 Categories 207

4.6iv Findings emerging from MAS Personal Expectations Regarding the Teacher's Personality - 3 Categegories 208

4.6v Findings Emerging from the Personal Attributes of the Teacher 209

4.7 Findings Emerging from the Pre-and Post-Reading Comprehension Questionnaires 210

4.8 Findings Emerging from the MAS' Lesson Assessment 213

4.8i Main Themes Emerging from MAS' Lesson Assessment 214

4.8ii Main Categories Emerging from MAS' Lesson Assessment 215

4.8iii General Findings Emerging from MAS' Lesson Assessment 217

4.9 Findings Emerging from the Interviews with MAS 218

4.9i Key Findings Emerging from the Interviews 223

4.10 Findings Emerging from Class Discussions 226

4.10i Progress 226

4.10ii Learning and Teaching 228

4.10iii Affective Factors 228

4.10iv Error Correction 230

4.10v Homework 230

4.10vi Confidence 231

4.11 Findings Emerging from the Observation by a Colleague 231

4.12 Findings Emerging from Personal Reflective Journals 236

4.13 Findings on General Outcomes in the MAS 30 237

Plus Preparatory Class

4.13i Anxiety Reduction 239

4.13ii Anxiety in Exams of Mature Adult Students 240

4.13iii Students' Tests and Classwork 241

4.14 Findings Emerging from ED - Electronic Dictionaries: 243

PD – Paper Dictionary Questionnaire (Appendix 9)

4.15 CONCLUSION 245

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 247

5.1 Discussion of Findings relating to Research Question 1 247

5.1i Metacognition 249

5.2 Discussion of findings relating to Research Question 2 250

5.3 Discussion of findings relating to Research Question 3 252

5.4 Discussion of Findings relating to Research Question 4 257

5.5 Interview with Lizzie 259

5.6 Value and Relevance of the Research 265

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS 267

6.1 Factual Conclusions 268

6.2 Conclusions Relating to the MAS Comments 271

6.3 Conclusions Relating to the Importance of Affective-Humanistic Teaching 272

6.4 Critique and Limitations of this Research 273

6.5 Contribution to Knowledge 278

6.6 Recommendations and Future Research 279

REFERENCES 281

APPENDICES 298

APPENDIX 1: – Hebrew Script 298

APPENDIX 2 – Arabic Script 299

APPENDIX 3 - Cognate Sheet – Open University of Israel 300

APPENDIX 4 - 'Th' sound for Hebrew Speakers 302

APPENDIX 5 - ALL ABOUT ME Pre-Course Questionnaire 303

APPENDIX 6 - Reading Comprehension Checklist Pre-Course 305

APPENDIX 7 - Reading Comprehension Checklist for Post- Course 307

APPENDIX 8 - Questionnaire for Reading Comprehension Teachers 309

APPENDIX 9 - Questionnaire for teachers regarding Electronic Dictionaries 310

APPENDIX 10 - Student Lesson Assessment 311

APPENDIX 11 – Research Design 312

APPENDIX 12 - Interview with MAS in 30 Plus Program 315

APPENDIX 13 – Observation Guidelines for Colleague Observer 318

APPENDIX 14 – Article in Haaretz English Newspaper 320

APPENDIX 15 – Preparing a Reading Comprehension Activity – Version 2 323

APPENDIX 16 - Reading Comprehension Skills and Objectives 329

APPENDIX 17 - Chart – Affective Aspects 330

APPENDIX 18 - Chart –Teaching and Learning 333

APPENDIX 19 - Questionnaire – Class Discussions 334

APPENDIX 20 - Example of Students Results 337

APPENDIX 21- Findings Emerging from the Pre-Study Questionnaire 338

APPENDIX 22 - Findings Emerging from the Post-Study Questionnaire 339

APPENDIX 23 – Conceptual Framework 340

APPENDIX 24 - Bejarano-Berman Reading Comprehension Checklist 341

APPENDIX 25 – Reading Sounds Exercise 342

APPENDIX 26 - Assessment Test to Ascertain the Standard of the MAS' at the Inception of the 30 Plus Preparatory Course 343

APPENDIX 27 - Interview with 'A' EFL/EAP Teacher 346

APPENDIX 28 - Guidelines for MAS Writing Reflective Diaries 352

APPENDIX 29-Reflective Teaching and The Affective Domain In The Classroom 353

List of Tables:

Table 1: Research Design 165

Table 2: Findings emerging from ALL ABOUT ME 203

Table 3: Findings Pre-Course Questionnaire 211

Table 4: Findings Post-Course Questionnaire 212

Table 5: 6 Categories Emerging from the MAS Lesson Assessments 216

List of Figures: :

Figure 1: Learning and Teaching 229

Figure 2: Affective Aspects 230

Figure 3: Kindness is the Key 273

KEYWORDS

Keywords: EAP – English for Academic Purposes. FLA - Foreign Language Anxiety. ELD – English Learning Difficulties. L1 - mother tongue. L2 – second language. L3 – third language. Hickey Program (Hickey Multisensory Language Course). MATACH - CET - Technological Center for Educational and Technological Expertise and Professional Development for Educational Staff. B.Ed. – Bachelor of Education. B.A. – Bachelor of Arts

GLOSSARY

EFL/EAP Reading Comprehension Program – Every student in Israel at an institute of academic learning is required to pass an exemption in reading comprehension in English for Academic Purposes, to receive the undergraduate degree. (BA; BSc; B.Ed) The levels are Beginners 2 & 3; Intermediate; Advanced 1&2.

MAS - Mature adult students – This term relates to students who are over the age of 30 and studying in the 30 Plus Preparation Program.

Matriculation (*Bagrut*) exam – The Israeli English Matriculation examination where pupils in the school system are tested according to certain parameters at 3, 4, 5point levels, 5 points being the highest level.

Meitsav Examination – Department of Education of Israel. The purpose being to assess the pedagogical standard of English and Mathematics in the 5^{th} and 8^{th} grades.

The **Psychometric Entrance Test** is a standardized test in Israel, generally taken as a higher education admission exam.

The **AMIRAM** is a computerized English Proficiency Test, which tests English reading comprehension at an academic level for placement in English language courses, or for exemption from such courses. No prior experience in the use of a

computer is necessary for taking this test.

The **AMIR** Test is a written timed test. Each academic institution has its own policy regarding the use of examinee scores. For the most part, scores are used to determine whether an examinee will be required to take English courses, and if so, at what level. A few institutions use the scores as one of their admissions criteria.

Unseens – 'Unseens' are texts that students have not seen previously and in a two and a half hour examination, they are required to answer comprehension questions.

Universal Grammar – UG – Noam Chomsky's Theory of Universal Grammar, is a theory in linguistics, proposing that the ability to learn grammar is innate and that linguistic aptitude manifests itself without being taught, and there are properties shared by all human languages.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1: Introduction – The introduction chapter sets the scene for understanding the research focus and context, as well as understanding the theoretical and practical issues related to the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review –The Literature review will refer to literature on the subject by accredited authors and researchers in order to show prior research and how it is related to this study on the issue of Adult Reading and Reading Comprehension. The literature review will deal chiefly with the importance of phonological awareness for reading fluency; a brief overview of new neuro-linguistic research in dyslexia; reading; reading comprehension strategies and vocabulary enhancement. Via the literature review, it will be possible to understand different pedagogical methodologies that address the needs of the MAS

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology – This chapter outlines the considerations that guided the methodological choices made for achieving the goals of this study. The Research Design covered the research perspective

that had elements of Action Research. Mixed methods were used – qualitative and quantitative – to examine the three groups of MAS (75 Students) in the 30 Plus Preparatory Program in the cohort of a university in the south of Israel. Data were collected via questionnaires, interviews, testing, self-assessment and observation on the teacher in the classroom. Triangulation was used to ascertain the validity and reliability of the study. All the qualitative data were presented in the form of narratives, and the statistical results presented in tables. The final categories were coded, triangulated and analyzed to ascertain the implications of the results.

Chapter 4: Findings – This chapter presents the findings as they emerged from the various research stages and data collection tools. The results presented show the participants' views on their learning and teaching within the 30 Plus MAS Program, and the impact of the affective teaching approach on students' learning of English.

Chapter 5: Discussion of the Findings – This section discusses the findings concerning the four research questions.

Chapter 6: Conclusions – This chapter presents the conclusions that emerged from the discussion of the outcomes, as well as the significance of the research and the significance of the Hickey System for teaching MAS Programs at colleges in Israel. Additionally, the chapter presents the possible application to other EFL/EAP constellations for MAS to bring them to success and overcome failure.

References

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

This study presents an area that has not been well researched in Israel, viz: THE 30 PLUS EFL/EAP PREPARATORY PROGRAM FOR MATURE ADULT STUDENTS. All potential students who wish to study for an undergraduate degree can enter the program without an Israeli matriculation. There are programs for non-readers and weak readers of English, such as the Hadad Program at Bar-Ilan University, but none that gives particular attention to the MAS.

- In Israel, there is a large group of **Mature Adult Students (MAS)** who have severe difficulties in contending with the English language and it is to this particular group that attention has been given in this research
- Non-Readers/Weak Learners who suffer from a lack of phonological awareness.
- Non-readers/Weak learners and students with Learning Difficulties (LD), have not only poor reading skills but also a negative self-image and lack confidence due to a history of failure in English.
- Non-readers/Weak learners who suffer from Foreign Language Anxiety.
- All the above students require very specific instruction for enhancing reading fluency, as well as reading comprehension guidance and direction.

DISCOVERY OF THE PROBLEM

While working in the School of Education in the college, teachers who held teaching diplomas, did not hold a B.Ed degree.English in Teacher Seminaries wasnot madatory. In 2004-2005 at the beginning of a 2-year course of studies for **Qualified Elementary School and High School teachers**: i.e. I was struck by the fact that half the class of some 25 students, both Hebrew and Arabic-speaking, were non-readers of English or extremely weak readers. They were depressed about the level of their English and saw the final exam at the end of the second year of study, as the 'Sword of Damocles' hanging

over their heads. I requested that the stronger readers should be removed to a higher level class and began to work intensively with the weaker group. I employed the Hickey Multisensory Approach – a phonological reading approach, together with the Bejarano-Berman Reading Comprehension List even at that very low level. The lessons were four academic hours a week, which meant that student motivation and enthusiasm had to be engendered immediately in order to see results and enable the students to complete the year and go on to achieve their exemption the following academic year.

When the situation repeated itself the following year 2005-2006, I requested permission from the Dean to embark on a pilot program. The results were the same.

Unhappy, frustrated qualified teachers who had not been able to cope with English during their school years and now they had to contend with academic texts about education. Again I employed the Hickey System and the Bejarano/Berman Reading Comprehension Lists with great success. Students began to enjoy the lessons, were surprised at their ability to give their English Studies their best shot, and were excited that they had conquered what one student said: 'my worst nightmare.' Making use of questionnaires and interviews, the students presented similar background tales of unhappy schooldays in the EFL classroom. Teachers who were unable to cope with weak pupils, and gave their attention to the stronger pupils, which meant many were left to their own devices and never contended with English, until arriving at the College of Education to complete their B.Ed., degrees.

Subsequently I moved over to a cohort of a large University in the same college where I began to teach the 30 Plus Program for Mature Adult Students. Here the same problem presented itself. Students who had been in the Israeli school system, a few were teachers, but most were business, in charge of offices, government, and municipalities. All highly intelligent, motivated but extremely fearful and anxious about their English.

GAP IN KNOWLEDGE

There are remediation programs in Israeli Colleges for students with learning difficulties in English. However, little research has been done in the area about the failure of Hebrew/Arabic-speaking, Mature Adult Students

Attention has been given to phonics in English classes at elementary school level, yet it seems students who enter college after 12 years in the Israeli school system have reading fluency and concomitant Reading Comprehension problems

3 Classes of weak/non-reader students of English were studied in a special preparatory program – the 30 Plus Program at the cohort of a university in the south of Israel. The ages of the students were as follows:

30 - 39 years = 37 students

40 - 49 years = 30 students

50 – 59 years = 8 students

THE RESEARCH AIMS FOR THE MAS IN THE 30 PLUS PROGRAM

- **To Determine how a particular reading methodology has resulted in Mature Adult Students' improved English reading ability and successful completion of Basic Preparatory English Reading Comprehension studies**

- **Students' perceptions concerning learning English, pre and post course studies in the Mature Students EFL/EAP 30 Plus Program**

- **To evaluate the progress of the students via tests, interviews, self-assessment, and self-reflection at regular intervals. Improve mechanical reading, reading strategies, vocabulary advancement, schema, and the development of metacognitive skills.**

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE MAS IN THE 30 PLUS PROGRAM

- **To what extent has an explicitly constructed teaching methodology been instrumental in the success of these students in achieving their goal for the exemption in Reading Comprehension for the BA degree?**
- **At what stage of their English knowledge are the Mature Adult Students when they arrive at the college? (Background information)**
- **What are the reasons leading to the past failures, fear and anxiety of MAS in the 30 Plus Program in a college in the south of Israel?**
- **Which strategies did students feel were the most influential in Reading Remediation and the ability to deal with academic texts?**

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Research Design covered the research perspective that had elements of Action Research. Mixed methods were used – qualitative and quantitative – to examine the three groups of MAS (75 Students) in the 30 Plus Preparatory Program in the cohort of a university in the south of Israel. Data were collected via questionnaires, interviews, testing, self-assessment and observation on the teacher in the classroom. Triangulation was used to ascertain the validity and reliability of the study. All the qualitative data were presented in the form of narratives, and the statistical results presented in tables. The final categories were coded, triangulated and analyzed to ascertain the implications of the results. (See Table – Page 18)

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

MATURE ADULT STUDENTS IN 30 PLUS PREPARATION PROGRAM

	Aim	Tool	Research Population
Quantitative research	To ascertain the students' level of reading at the inception stage of their studies	Questionnaires	75 students
		A reading test	75 students
Applying the intervention program			
Qualitative research	To ascertain the teachers' views of their students' reading abilities and difficulties	Open-ended questionnaire	20 teachers
	To ascertain the students' perceptions regarding their difficulties and needs in learning to read	Semi-structured interviews	20 students
	To understand my Reflections on the students' learning To read	My reflective journal	researcher
	To explore the Students' reflections Of their progress During the course	Students' reflective journals	20 students
Quantitative part	To measure the students' level of reading at the end Of the program	A reading test	75 students

THE TEACHING METHODOLOGY

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE MATURE ADULT STUDENTS' 30 PLUS PREPARATORY PROGRAM

The conceptual framework of the Mature Adult Student 30 Plus Program is based on three pillars:

1. Reading and Language Acquisition
2. Reading and Language Teaching Methodology
3. Reading Comprehension.

All academic reading and reading comprehension is grounded in the students' ability to read fluently and with understanding. Phonics is a method of teaching reading and writing the English language by developing learners' phonemic awareness. That is, the ability to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes to illustrate and emphasize the correspondence between these sounds and the spelling patterns (graphemes) that represent them. The goal of phonics is to enable beginning readers to decode newly written words by sounding them out, or in phonics terms, *blending* the sound-spelling patterns. Since it focuses on the spoken and written units within words, phonics is a sub-lexical approach and, as a result, is often contrasted with *whole language*, a word-level-up philosophy for teaching reading. This approach underpins the **Hickey Methodology.** By making use of the alphabetical principle, where each letter denotes a sound or phoneme, students can begin swiftly and efficiently decode and develop phonic awareness, which increases their ability to read. Reading fluency underpins the significance of higher level language skills acquisition and is concomitant with reading comprehension necessary for academic prowess in English.

The Hickey Multisensory Language Methodology is phonologically and phonemically oriented. This system was originally created for dyslexic pupils on a one-to-one basis. *'Early identification of the child's learning style is vital. If the right teaching approach is used. This lies in the hand of the teacher. 'The*

Language Training Course is an approach that is designed to prevent failure.' (Hickey, (1994: xviii).

The goal of phonics is to enable beginning readers to decode newly written words by sounding them out, or in phonics terms, *blending* the sound-spelling patterns. Since it focuses on the spoken and written units within words, phonics is a sub-lexical approach and, as a result, is often contrasted with whole language, a word-level-up philosophy for teaching reading. This approach underpins the Hickey Methodology and makes use of the alphabetical principle, where each letter denotes a sound or phoneme, students can begin to decode swiftly and efficiently and develop phonic awareness that increases their ability to read. The Hickey Multisensory Language Methodology was combined with the **Bejarano-Berman (1992) Reading Comprehension Materials Development Checklist.** (Open University of Israel). This enabled students to improve reading fluency and reading comprehension strategies.

THE INTERVENTION PROGRAM: TEACHING METHODOLOGY – THE HICKEY MULTISENSORY PROGRAM

- **Beginning Lessons 1-2-3**

READING

Non-reader Students are given an adapted cognate sheet of the ABC with words that are found in Hebrew and in English. An explanation of the cognate sheet and the reading approach is demonstrated in the lesson. Students are expected to review and practice the phonics at home: e.g. Aa-avocado (cognate picture)

Cognate Sheet – The Town of Five Oaks (1991-Open University of Israel)

- How each phonogram is connected : e.g. c-a-t
- Reading pages; teacher reads with the students.
- Teacher introduces small appropriate texts and translates into Hebrew.

- Teacher shows students how to divide up sentences into understandable parts

- Teacher shows students how to look for refererence words and to draw arrows to the point of referral

- Teacher reviews by asking questions and making sure that students understand the techniques that are to be used.

- Students begin to understand the reading methodology and practice at home

- Students are encouraged to **copy from the texts**, **highlight new words, look up and translate new vocabulary** and **write** into an alphabetic exercise book

(Hickey Multisensory Language Course (1994))

READING COMPREHENSION

- Simultaneously with reading comprehension strategies, students continue to learn reading rules

- All reading aloud is done by teacher. Looking for words and answers in the texts by students.

- Students are encouraged to use the electronic dictionary in the classroom and the regular dictionary at home while doing homework.

- Students work in small groups, pairs and individually.

- Teacher constantly reviews reading, reading comprehension strategies and pays attention to students' difficulties and questions.

Bejarano-Berman (1992) Reading Comprehension Materials Development Checklist. Open University of Israel

Susan McShane (2005)

Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults First Steps for Teachers

National Institute for Literacy

Kruidenier et al (2010) Adult Education Literacy Instruction – A Review of the Research.

VOCABULARY ENHANCEMENT

- Most Mature Adult Students have very poor or almost no basic English vocabulary. Hence this is an extremely important part of their EFL/EAP studies.

- Vocabulary enrichment is an essential part of reading comprehension of texts, and how to integrate the newly acquired vocabulary by association with previous vocabulary and knowledge (Schema).

- Affixes - Prefixes and Suffixes and Roots of words enable students to acquire vocabulary that is both important and useful in their EAP studies. They are able to increase their vocabulary by the affixes for nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs.

- Students are given a vocabulary word list with every new text and the words are translated into Hebrew or Arabic according to the students understanding of the word.

- In order to augment reading fluency, students are encouraged to write in Hebrew or in Arabic the phonics of a particular word.

Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language 3rd Ed – Celce- Murcia (2014)

Teaching Reading to Adult English Language Learners (2005) Center for Applied Linguistics, Office of Adult Community Education.

FINDINGS OF MATURE ADULT STUDENTS'

SELF ASSESSMENT- THE ALL ABOUT ME QUESTIONNAIRE

Handed out in the first Lesson

Please circle the number that best describes your level in each one of the following skills on a scale of 1-5. 1 is not good, 5 is very good.

75 Students (3 Semesters) participated in the study.

	1	2	3	4	5
English reading	30	20	13	10	2
English writing	25	20	18	10	2
English speaking 6 students did not answer	20	20	17	10	5
English listening and understanding	25	20	10	9	8

The categories were drawn from the **'ALL ABOUT ME'** questionnaire distributed at the inception of the course.

- **TEACHING**: Findings showed 13 categories of what the students expected from the teacher with regard to their learning.

  The most important finding was: That the teacher should teach well and provide tools for understanding.

- **PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES**: Findings showed 7 categories of requests as to how the teacher should perceive them as students.

  The most important finding was: That the teacher should be patient and understanding.

  FINDINGS THAT EMERGED FROM TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRES

  Seventeen teachers from two colleges all expressed their experienced opinions that students were unable to read fluently in English at all levels, viz: Basic, intermediate and advanced.

  They noted that:

- teachers at the high school level were unable to teach reading and had no knowledge of how to do so
- teachers commented on the lack of schema of students at all levels
- teachers commented on students inability to decode phonologically
- teachers stated that students blamed the schools
- teachers considered that student teachers needed to be thoroughly trained in the importance of phonics at an early stage at elementary level, as well as the importance of noting LD pupils

THE MAIN FINDINGS THAT EMERGED FROM THE VARIOUS TOOLS SHOWED:

- For Mature Adult Students to be able to cope with authentic English texts after the preparatory course, and successfully entering the next stage of their English studies. Qualified teachers are needed who are skilled at remediation and who can identify the problems that the MAS had encountered in their youth and their present quest for the English exemption for the undergraduate degree.

- The qualitative and quantitative data indicated the students lack of security about their ability to cope with the 'Labors of Sisyphus', and only after having studied in a remedial environment did they realize that there was indeed a system that would scaffold them all the way through to the end of their studies.

- The data in personal interviews seems to suggest that students acknowledged that they had encountered a system of learning to read in English and that by working diligently and continuously, they felt that they were making progress in their reading comprehension skills as well.

- 20 students were formally interviewed, and 20 informally and there seemed to be a recurring pattern: Students who came from homes where only Arabic and Hebrew were spoken have greater difficulties with phonemic awareness in English.

- In personal lesson assessments – students reiterated their desire for more vocabulary strategies and to learn how to speak English, despite the fact that they were constantly reminded that the program was only for Reading Comprehension.

- The affective domain in the classroom seemed to encourage the diminishing of the fear of the language. As in Celce-Murcia (2014)

- In interviews with colleagues, the problem of poor readers and inferior reading comprehension skills reoccur in all the interviews. It would seem that teachers at the college are of the opinion that not enough attention has been paid the importance of teaching and learning of basic reading skills at the grass-roots level.

- It would seem that the success of the intervention program resides within raising phonological awareness, providing systematic phonic reading instruction, learning and applying reading comprehension strategies, enlarging vocabulary, providing a secure learning environment. All the

teachers who were interviewed or answered the questionnaires, were in agreement that the majority of students who had passed the Israeli English Matriculation (Bagrut) and were singularly unable to read fluently in English, were from the Jewish sector or Arab. This estimation was supported by David (2010:322)

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

To sum up: The problem with their phonological awareness transpired that students had never been taught to associate a letter with a 'sound' and only knew the name of the letter. As young pupils in the elementary school, they had been taught the ABC song, which only gives the names of the letters and not the phonic sound. Hence, the name of the letter 'h' sounds 'aitch' and not 'heh', which enables the student to read a word correctly. Shaywitz (2003:53) supports this, stating that decoding is impaired when the phonological awareness does not function correctly and since the two major components of reading are decoding and comprehension, this was initially a stumbling block in the MAS classroom.

When examining the effects of the Hickey system on the 30 Plus Mature Adult Students, there developed awareness that there was a solution to their reading problems. Since most Mature Adult Students have poor or almost no basic English vocabulary, this area requires particular attention.

As students' reading fluency improved, so did their reading comprehension. Reading comprehension requires particular skills and strategies to enhance understanding. These skills are augmented by students learning about text structure and type of text requiring reading strategies, such as skimming, scanning, context clues, schema – making the connection between new and old information. The elicitation of schema can be likened to an archeological excavation, where students realize that they have a fund of untapped knowledge that may relate to the various texts that are read in the classroom.

Of extreme importance in the realm of reading comprehension skills is the development of metacognition. The development of metacognitive skills takes time and practice. However, by answering questions in the classroom, students were encouraged to consider how they arrived at a particular answer and what thinking processes they had employed during the exercise. Initially, students were surprised by this concept; however, with time they began to realize that metacognitive skills have their implications for their other studies, as well as developing their English reading comprehension. In addition, students were taught to make predictions about the author's intention and purpose, inferences – reading between the lines.

MAS studied different types of text organization such as:

- problem – solution
- cause – result
- comparison – contrast
- description
- sequence.

Students also became aware that all these aspects can be included in various texts that they study during the semester. Regarding study techniques, they were taught to make use of highlighters; circling; arrows; underlining; boxes, mapping, summarizing and commenting in L1 in the margins of the texts. (Bejarano-Berman Reading Comprehension Checklist (Open University of Israel 1991)

Students' assessments towards the end of the semester were via classroom tests. For example, students were given a short text called a 'Seen' that they were required to translate and study in depth. The first Unseen test took place some five weeks after the inception of the course, thus giving learners time to embed and consistently review the new material. Another factor of extreme importance was in the realm of reading comprehension

skills is the development of metacognition. The development of metacognitive skills takes time and practice. However, by answering questions in the classroom, students were encouraged to consider how they arrived at a particular answer and what thinking processes they had employed during the exercise. Initially, students were surprised by this concept; however, with time they began to realize that metacognitive skills have their implications for their other studies, as well as developing their English reading comprehension. In addition, students were taught to make predictions about the author's intention and purpose, inferences – reading between the lines.

Students' assessments towards the end of the semester were via classroom tests. For example, students were given a short text called a 'Seen' that they were required to translate and study in depth. The first Unseen test took place some five weeks after the inception of the course, thus giving learners time to embed and consistently review the new material.

The data indicated that the majority of the Mature Adult Students had encountered some extremely unpleasant experiences as children in the elementary school system, which spilled over to their high-school experience. The majority felt that they had been neglected and shunted aside while the teachers gave their attention to the stronger pupils.

A finding that persisted throughout the interviews was that all the students except one had come from difficult socio-economic circumstances and that their parents could not afford to give them the much-needed help in English via extra-mural tutoring. Many came from large families, and if they were the older children, they frequently were obliged to leave school after the mandatory period to help financially. Thereby missing out on a higher level of education.

The difficulties encountered by MAS from Middle Eastern countries were apparent in the 30 Plus Preparatory Program, despite the fact that they had been exposed to English for many years even after leaving the Israeli school system. This disregard during their more impressionable years, inevitably led to feelings

of inadequacy, resentment, fear of failure and extreme anxiety with any connection with English.

Stages of MAS Students' Progress in the 30 Plus Preparatory Program

1. Complete lack of confidence – depression
2. Feelings of anxiety, frustration, bitterness and even anger
3. Enthusiasm as a result of contending with the 'monster' EFL/EAP.
4. Improved self-image and self-confidence
5. Desire to continue and complete the Advanced Level and the Exemption

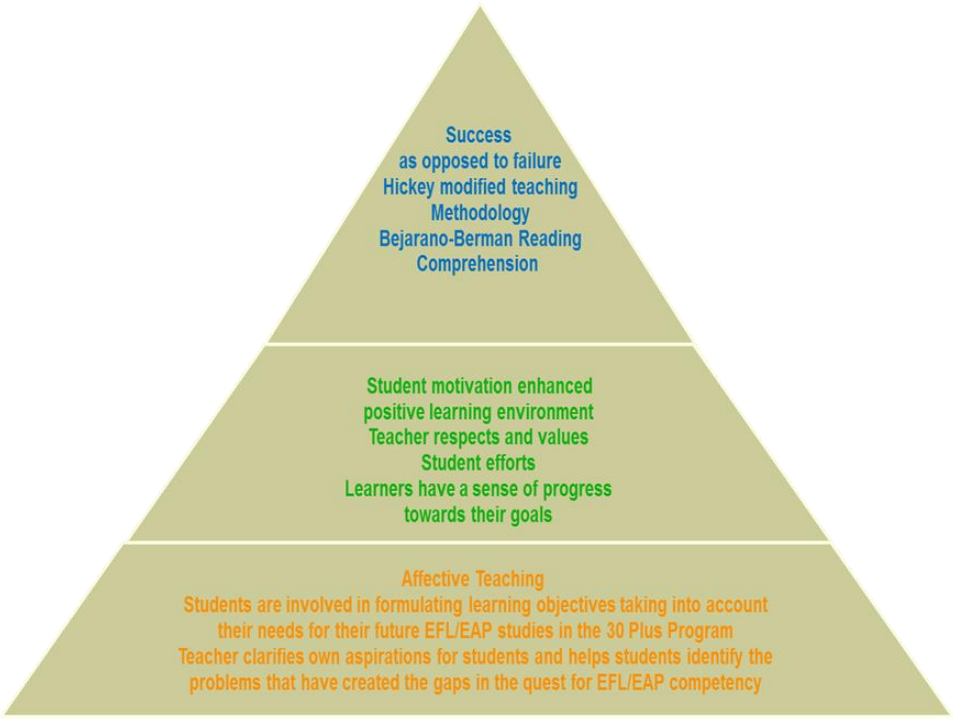
CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions and Recommendations

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER - THE AFFECTIVE APPROACH FOR MATURE ADULT STUDENTS

30 PLUS PROGRAM

'KINDNESS IS THE KEY'



CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO STUDENTS COMMENTS ON PERCEPTION OF COURSE

- Self confidence
- Most of the students felt they had succeeded beyond their 'wildest' expectations
- Understanding of their past failures and the reasons
- Empathetic and friendly relations between Jewish and Arab students
- Students felt they had developed a joy of learning English, whereas previously they had only known fear, anxiety and failure
- Students mentioned that the fact that all explanations were in Hebrew facilitated their understanding and lessened anxiety
- Students considered that the hours of study should have been divided into three hourly slots twice a week
- Students revealed that they had improved vocabulary acquisition
- The Ripple Effect. Students considered that they had mastered reading comprehension strategies and skills which they were able to apply not only to English texts, but also to Hebrew and Arabic texts that were mandatory reading for other subjects. They claimed this facilitated their overall learning process.
- Students stated that the Positive Class atmosphere had contributed much to their success.

CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AFFECTIVE APPROACH IN THE MATURE ADULT STUDENTS 30 PLUS PROGRAM

- Success as opposed to failure
- Student motivation enhanced
- Positive learning environment
- Learner empowerment
- Learners have a sense of progress towards their future goals
- Students understand what is expected of them
- The teacher is available for students to express concerns
- Students, are treated as equals by their instructor in a participatory environment

- The Teacher clarifies his/her own aspirations for students and helps students identify the problems that have created the gaps in the quest for EFL/EAP competency.
- Teacher respects and values MAS' efforts
- All the above create not only a supportive learning environment, but also a loving, accepting and understanding milieu of reducing stress in the English language class which is one of the most important tasks for a teacher to implement

CRITIQUE AND SOME LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

- **Social desirability** ALL ABOUT ME QUESTIONNAIRE given in the first lesson to the MAS where they were asked to state: I enjoy learning English? 50 later admitted that they enjoyed learning English because they considered it to be 'politically correct.'
- **Researcher bias**. On self-reflection regarding my opinion of how English/EFL should be taught to weak and low-level students. Being so involved, I was genuinely cognizant of the possibility that my bias 'vibes' might influence students' attitudes and responses, as well as the subject of 'social desirability.' I frequently felt hurt and distressed that the MAS had met with unfair treatment at a very important stage of their school-life.
- **The potential complexity** of affecting a possible change in English teachers' perceptions of their attitudes to all types of weak students, even though this research might contribute to teacher empowerment in MAS Programs.
- **Interviews** required careful preparation. There were constant changes of time, venue, and even absences, where the interviewer could wait for the interviewee who would arrive late or not at all.
- **The difficulty of organizing meetings with students** for interviews. The ostensible reason being, time, work and family pressure and other activities in their lives.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Contribution to theoretical knowledge:

Closing the gap in knowledge that existed:

- Regarding reading acquisition and reading comprehension difficulties of MAS learning EFL/EAP within the 30 Plus Preparatory Program.
- Proposing insights to the teaching EFL/EAP in such programs, using the Hickey Multi-sensory Method as a basis and incorporating the Bejerano-Berman Reading Comprehension Strategies, as well as the Reflective/Affective Teaching Approach.

Contribution to practical knowledge:

This work could possibly be used as a model in teacher training colleges where young student teachers, may not be entirely cognizant of the immensity of the responsibility resting on their professional shoulders and the implications for the future success of their young charges.

Contribution to theoretical knowledge:

Closing the gap in knowledge that existed:

- Regarding reading acquisition and reading comprehension difficulties of MAS learning EFL/EAP within the 30 Plus Preparatory Program.
- Proposing insights to the teaching EFL/EAP in such programs, using the Hickey Multi-sensory Method as a basis and incorporating the Bejerano-Berman Reading Comprehension Strategies, as well as the Reflective/Affective Teaching Approach.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Consideration for future research:

- To examine students who were in the 30 Plus Beginners' Classes, who had successfully completed the Advanced 2 Exemption Level for the undergraduate degree.
- Whether the skills and strategies studied at the Beginners level in the 30 Plus Preparatory Program had aided them throughout their EAP studies.

- To continue examining the latest Neurolinguistic research methods and apply them in my teaching and future research in order to benefit non-readers with learning difficulties in English.

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