



PhD

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The Impact of EFL on Higher-Education

Do intervention programs, directed towards enhancing linguistic competencies, impact under-achieving high-school students' perception of and attitudes towards higher education and academic self-efficacy?

-Long Abstract-

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the correlation between enhancing competencies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) amongst under-achieving students (UAS) in high-school, and their transition to higher-education. It investigates the linguistic, pragmatic methods that enhance the level of EFL with UAS, and its impact on their adult lives. Literature demonstrates that the significance of learning a foreign language (Armstrong & Rogers, 1997), and the growing number of UAS in the schooling system (The Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018), have urged the induction of numerous intervention programs to enhance EFL studies among UAS.

Following the mixed methods philosophy, a three part study was designed to examine not only the effectiveness of these programs in promoting UAS' to higher-education but, their perceptions of their own academic self-efficacy as well. Yet in the lead stands the need for a well-established linguistic comprehension of the mostly recommended approaches and methods to teach a foreign language to UAS. The findings of this study led to three compelling conclusions: First, by means of interviews based on the case study design, a tool box for EFL teachers of UAS was designed, and a call for policy makers to provide direct support to the classes under its supervision. The support must include the establishing of a school community of teachers of UAS, with consistent and proficient advisors to help develop and improve the motivation amongst their UAS in general, and particularly encourage a sociolinguistic awareness for both teachers and students. Secondly, following the ex-post facto design, questionnaires distributed to 162 young women and men which were then triangulated using interviews to thirteen of the participants. From the findings of both questionnaires and interviews it can be concluded that even though the correlation between the level of EFL and enrolling in higher-education was refuted, its influence on the academic self-efficacy of its graduates was significant. Therefore, the intervention programs that enhance EFL competencies to UAS are of great significance and should be nurtured and expanded in more communities in Israel and in other schools around the world, where UAS are part of the social fabric.

Finally, this study has established, for the first time, the rate of 74.2% UAS who apply to higher-education. This calls for a nation-wide examination of the complete numbers of UAS graduates who apply to higher-education.

1. INTRODUCTION

In our 21st century technologically-based world, there is broad consensus of the importance of postsecondary education, a degree from any recognized academic institution, any college or university, hereafter referred to as higher-education. To become an effective member of the adult society, to achieve a significant role in society and have high-ranking employment, it is no longer sufficient to have simply graduated high-school (Bailey and Karp, 2003).

A prerequisite for academic studies is a high school certificate (in Israel it is known as the BAGRUT). While some high school students successfully meet the high demands and expectations of the final examinations which open the doors for higher-education, a significant numbers of students fail to achieve that goal and are literally left behind, not being able to apply to academic studies. The latter, have been classified as under-achieving students (UAS) and are of great concern for all educational systems all over the world (Shepp Battle, 2002).

This problem has been growing since the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Act of 2001 initiated by President G. Bush in the USA. At the core of the NCLB Act were a number of measures designed to drive broad gains in student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress (Act, N. C. L. B. 2002). Each State has been developing its own policy and special intervention programs to promote the UAS, according to the demands of the academic institutes and the high-school diploma requirements, aiming initially at keeping the youngsters in the schooling system for 12 years, secondly helping them successfully pass the final examinations to be entitled of a high school diploma, and finally providing them with access to college.

These measures, which represented significant changes to the education landscape in the USA, were copied in July 2007 by the State of Israel, when the Law for Compulsory Education for kindergarten to 10th grade was broadened to include 11th and 12th grade (The Compulsory Education Law, 2007). As a consequence of the change in population in schools, their different backgrounds and needs, intervention programs have been developed and inculcated into the schooling system in Israel, some funded by a special wing at the Israeli Ministry of Education, the Shahar Wing,

and others through special donors, all aiming at bridging the gaps between successful students in school and under-achievers.

Furthermore, In the Israeli high-schools, although students may choose the level of difficulty in each subject (from 1-5), a minimum of 4 points in English is required for acceptance to any Israeli higher-education institute (The Ministry of Education, Israel, 2013). Thus, English as a foreign language, EFL, can determine the quality of the BAGRUT, and differentiate between students with or without direct access to college or university.

Statistics show that in 2009, while 65.8% of high-school students had a final BAGRUT only 48%, accomplished a BAGRUT with direct access to higher-education, and 58.4% continued to higher-education (CBS, 2017). In the USA, 84.6% of high-school attendees are receiving their diploma, yet the percentage of high-school graduates who enroll in college was only 69% in 2008, fell to 66% in 2013 and has not changed until 2017 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019) .

How have these programs affected the UAS? Has any change occurred in the students' attitude toward further higher studies and their academic self-efficacy? Do the AUS, who succeed to bridge the gap and obtain access to college, actually enroll in post high-school studies? Do they feel that the intervention programs have provided them with the appropriate tools and skills to meet the demands of the post high school studies?

In search of replies to these questions, this study has been designed. First, the review of literature presents both the Israeli educational system and the sociolinguistic implications of teaching a foreign language. Then the methodological design of this mixed methods study is brought fore, which is followed by the findings and the recommendations that point to the major significance of the intervention programs for UAS in enhancing academic self-efficacy. In addition, the innovation of school communities for all teachers of UAS is recommended and a tool box for EFL teachers of UAS is established. Finally, further comprehensive research is recommended that will examine the rate of students from MABAR/ETGAR classes who apply to higher-education and compare to this study's results. These will hopefully close both the

following gap described hereafter, and the missing information on the list of objectives of the intervention programs.

1.1 Gap in Knowledge

Policy makers invest numerous resources on special intervention and enhancement programs for UAS. It is therefore bewildering that the long term impact of these programs is not examined. Furthermore, a well-structured tool-box for enhancing EFL to UAS will be welcomed by teachers who long for guidance and support.

1.2 Research aims

The two major aims of this study were:

- 1) To examine the linguistic and practical approaches and methods which enhance the English competencies of UAS (part one).
- 2) To evaluate the perceptions of UAS of the impacts of the intervention programs, on their academic self-efficacy and their attitudes towards higher-education (parts two and three).

1.3 Study Questions

This study aimed at resolving the following questions:

1. What are the linguistic implications and methods for teaching EFL to UAS?
2. Are the intervention programs in high-school perceived (by graduates and teachers), as effective in enhancing the level of EFL?
3. a. Was the level of English studied in high-school a factor in considering higher-education studies?
b. Did it have any impact on the student's academic self-efficacy?

1.4 Key Words:

Under-achieving students (UAS) ; English as a foreign language (EFL); Linguistic methods; Enhancing linguistic competencies; Sociolinguistics; Motivation; Intervention Programs; Higher-Education; Transition to higher-education; Teachers' Community; Tool Box; Teaching EFL; MABAR / ETGAR classes; Good language learners (GLL); Academic self-efficacy; BAGRUT; High-quality BAGRUT; Foreign languages; Long term impact.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Through the review of the extant literature which underpins the theories used for this research, the following issues are addressed:

2.1. The Israeli Educational System

2.2. Impacts of school and socio-economic status on academic achievements

2.3. Learning a foreign language and academic success

2.1 The Israeli Educational System

Following the change implemented by the Compulsory Law for Education (2007), the number of students in secondary schools has almost doubled between the years 1995 and 2010 (CBS, 2016). This in turn, led to a change in schools' population, with more students coming from different backgrounds, having diverse needs, and not necessarily achieving the final requirements for the BAGRUT.

Underachievement in schools has been given great attention in recent years. Governments have been focusing their educational policies in improving standards in schools. The statistics of the National Center for Educational Statistics in Israel (CBS, 2017) show that more than 30% of the students in high-school do not achieve a BAGRUT certificate, and more than half (54.4%) of all students who do try for the BAGRUT certificate do not obtain a score worthy of a high-quality BAGRUT, thus they are not equipped with direct access to college or university. Who are UAS? Why are they of great concern to the Educational System?

Muir (2000), in his research of UAS in the Middle School, defines UAS according to both the students and their teachers as those bright kids who neither like school nor do well in their studies. The Institute of Achievement and Motivation in New York (2003), emphasizes on the potential of the students, claiming that UAS have intellectual capacity and academic skills necessary to present significantly higher levels of achievements that they present in reality.

The above mentioned statistics and the definitions of UAS, make it obvious that almost half of our high-school students can be categorized as under-achievers. Existing intervention programs, which had been developed and inculcated into the schooling system in Israel, became even more significant. The intervention programs all aim at bridging the gaps between successful students in school and UAS. The programs, funded by the Sachar Wing at the Israeli Ministry of Education,

provide special classes with small numbers of students (18-25 students) within the normative schooling system, the MABAR and ETGAR classes (The Ministry of Education, 2019). The Ministry of Education further budgets for enhancement hours for these students, to help them meet the requirements of the final exams, believing in their potential and ability to succeed.

Some research has been conducted (Roziner, Ratner, Raz, & Rosenbaum, 2012), showing that these special classes with the intervention programs have been successful in accomplishing the first three objectives on the list of the program:

Objective	Success Rates	
	MABAR	ETGAR
1.Preventing drop out and enhancing persistency	99.4% (in 2017)	98.3% (in 2017)
2.Increasing the number of students entitled to the BAGRUT certificate	77.72% (in 2017)	54.96%(in 2017)
3. Increasing the number of students with high-quality BAGRUT	50% of the A/M (in 2015)	
4. Exposing, assisting and conveying tools and opportunities to UAS to integrate in the army / national / civil service, the employment world and in higher-education		?
5. Developing tools for enhancing motivation, self-awareness, academic self-efficacy and emotional competence		?
6. Developing differential teaching methods to promote UAS		?
7. Developing a feeling of social belonging and involvement of the student in the community		?

Table 2.1: Objective List of the MABAR/ETGAR classes

Objectives number 4, 5, and 6 on the list are the goal of this study, as will be shown in the following sections.

In Israel there are three requirements for high-school graduates that increase their entrance probability to higher-education: a final high-school certificate of high

quality; a high score on the psychometric exam; and a high score on the EFL BAGRUT Exam (EBE).

Even though the levels of mathematics and of EFL, which are both compulsory subjects in Israeli high-schools, form a criterion of the quality of the BAGRUT (The Ministry of Education, Israel, 2013), only in EFL the pre-requisites of universities and colleges are for 4/5 units of EFL, no less. Thus, EFL can both determine the quality of the BAGRUT, and differentiate between students with or without direct access to college or university.

EFL is therefore, a very significant factor. Not only English is the current lingua franca in the world – an additional contact language between people who share neither a common native tongue nor a common national culture (Jenkins, 2008) - but also, it is a constituent of the quality of the final BAGRUT (The Ministry of Education, Israel, 2013). Therefore, special enhancement programs for EFL have been further incorporated into the schooling system, mainly in the classes of UAS. The programs, according to the hand-books that were published by the Ministry of Education (Roziner, Ratnet, Raz & Rosenbaum, 2012), combine different learning approaches, varied educational methods and a special timetable coupled with a curriculum specifically designed to meet the special needs of UAS.

Thus, learning EFL to a high level is significant in the eyes of policy makers. How is this claim manifested by literature?

2.2 Impact of schools and the socio-economic status on academic success

Various studies indicate that the education in high-school is crucial in regard to a student's transition to college (Walker, 2010, Mayya & Roff, 2004), and that a student's academic achievement in high-school is correlated with peer and non-academic activities.

Other researchers have challenged the implications of family Socio-Economic Status (SES) on students' academic achievements. Michael Kieffer (2010), Sirin (2005), Reyn van Ewijk and Peter Sleegers (2010), Soen & Davidovitch (2009), claim that it is the limited social services, violence, homelessness, illegal drug trafficking that the children of low SES have to deal with in addition to the situation at home that influence students' success in high-school, not purely the social economic status.

They concluded that there is no straight forward correlation between the SES level of a student's background and his/her scholastic achievements, neither in high-school, nor in college. All these studies emphasize the significant role of schools in preparing their graduates for higher-education and imply on their potential impact on students' transition to higher-education. The schooling system is the place to inculcate change and provide every participant in the system with a fair chance for higher-education that will allow mobility in society and equal opportunities.

The role of foreign language learning is also very clear and significant, not only in providing the acquired knowledge of the language, in this case English, as means of communication in the modern world, but also as means of opening and expanding the cognitive abilities and learning skills of the students.

2.3 Learning a foreign language and academic success

Many studies have been conducted on the academic impact of foreign language learning. Following are a few examples: Armstrong & Rogers (1997), claim that language learning correlates with higher academic achievements on standardized measures. Demont (2001) argues that there is correlation between second language learning and increased linguistic awareness. According to Kessler and Quinn (1980), language learning has an impact even on students' ability to hypothesize in science. Another interesting study held by Buriel, Perez, De Ment, Chavez and Moran (1988), concluded that learners who use their language skills to interpret and translate for family members, experience higher academic performances and greater self-efficacy. In their research they found that language brokering and biculturalism were positively related to academic performance. In addition, the strongest predictor of academic performance was academic self-efficacy. (Buriel, Perez, De Ment, Chaves, & Moran, 1998). Wiley (1985), found that those who studied Latin, French, German, or Spanish in high-school may be expected to perform better academically in college than students of equal academic ability who do not take a foreign language.

All these studies show the big advantage of second / foreign language acquisition. It is therefore not surprising that in most schools throughout the world and in higher education as well, learning a foreign language is compulsory and a prerequisite for graduating. In addition to the above mentioned requirements in the Israeli educational system, in the Romanian educational system, for example, students in high-school

have to take a minimum of two other languages along with Romanian (Ministry of Romanian Education and Research, 2019). In the UK, students aged 5-16 are obliged to attend the Education System by law of compulsory education and when they are in their 3rd stage of education, ages 11-14, they have to learn a modern foreign language (Education System in UK, 2018).

Understanding the significant role of being competent in a foreign language, arises two additional questions that must be addressed: what does it take to acquire-naturally or artificially- a language, and what are the most efficient methods for teachers of a foreign language to enhance the competencies of their students?

2.3.1 Learning a Foreign Language

Since the early 1960's, linguists have argued that by nature, humans possess a mental faculty which enables them to learn a native language with little effort (Weisler & Milekic, 2001). Furthermore, a person who is cognitively intact can acquire any number of languages at a native speaker's level during the first decade of life. In order to master a language, a person must have rich knowledge of all three accumulative components in the following way:

- a. **The Sound System**- the tacit knowledge that a speaker of a language builds up as he becomes proficient in the language, knowledge that pertains to the phonetic and phonological properties of a language.
- b. Lexical Representation, **words**- having lexical or morphological knowledge of the words and their constitutive parts. According to Weisler and Milekic (2001, p.62), lexical knowledge has impact on expanding the horizons.
- c. Syntax- the patterns of language that can be taken when practicing one or another language – i.e.: how to form well-structured **sentences**, a paragraph and finally a whole text.

Weisler & Milekic (2001), explain that learning a foreign language entails all those same parts of learning L1. The terms 'learning' and 'acquiring' are exchangeable in literature, thus the difference between them will be disregarded hereby.

The scope of this study is teaching EFL to Hebrew speakers, thus it is significant to understand the differences between the two languages. In particular, this study

focuses on UAS, thus aiming at understanding the difficulties Hebrew speaking UAS have in studying English and the challenges their teachers must confront.

2.3.2.a The Hebrew Language

Hebrew is an ancient Semitic language in the Afro-Asiatic family (Mathilda's Anthropology Blog, 2009). It shares many features with Arabic, which is the other Western- Semitic language spoken today, and Ethiopian. Its alphabet is an ancestor of the 22 figures alphabet that was developed from the cuneiform, around 1500 BC, by unknown Sumerian people of Mesopotamia, (Levi, R. 2017).

It was revived by Eliezer ben Yehuda, during the Zionistic period in the 19th century (Ibid). The grammar follows the Bible in its morphology and lexicon, and is updated by the Academy of the Hebrew Language in Jerusalem. Its rich and systematic morphology is formed from three consonant letter combinations, known as the roots, conveyed by the 22 letters of the alphabet. These roots are conjugated and inflected to form the morphemes (The Academy of Hebrew Language, 2017).

2.3.2.b The English Language

The Indo-European family includes most of the modern languages of Europe, and parts of Western, Central, and South Asia (Indo-European languages, 2017). Many languages influenced the formation of present day English among which are Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, Old French, Latin, Danish, Norman and more.

Present day English (PDE), surfaced when more vocabulary had been introduced by the Industrial Revolution, the development of technology, and the adoption of foreign words from the many countries that the English Empire had reigned over, such as Spanish during the colonization of North America and African languages during the long years of slavery (The English Club, 2017).

PDE is an analytical language, which expresses much of its grammatical meaning by free words, a linear morphology which is formed by the morpheme and prefixes and suffixes (Bick, Goleman, & Frost, 2013). The word order is quite strict, following the subject-verb-object (S-V-O) pattern. PDE consists of items such as: articles, auxiliaries, pronouns, conjunctions, infinitives, etc.

A native speaker of any language has deep and tacit knowledge of the sound system which includes the unique pronunciation of the words and sounds, of the stress and

intonation and the right information of the effects of linguistic and nonlinguistic factors on the pronunciation of the lexis (Weisler & Milekic, 2001).

Both Hebrew and English are living languages and as such, changes are still occurring maybe slowly but surely.

2.3.3 EFL Teaching Methods

Since the 1970s, there has been a growing interest amongst researchers such as Rubin (1975), Stern (1975), Hosenfeld (1976) and Naiman (1978) searching for the optimal strategies, methods, pedagogies and approaches for helping students become good language learners (GLL). During the next two decades, more research was conducted by Chamot, 1987; O'malley et al., 1985; Wenden and Rubin, 1987; Cohen, 1998; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990, 1996; Wenden, 1991 to name a few. This interest penetrated into the new millennium with fervor, as presented in the literature by researchers (like Cohen, 2011; Cohen and Macaro, 2007; Griffiths, 2008, 2013; Oxford, 2011). By studying GLL, a conclusion was made that the strategies, to learn a second / foreign language, are as bewildering as learning L1, and that our remarkable brain is capable of acquiring more than one foreign language to a high level of proficiency. Yet, trying to point at the best and most efficient strategies for becoming GLL, became a big controversy. Rebecca L. Oxford (2017), mentions 100 different strategies for learning a second or foreign language. According to Oxford (2017), Griffiths & Gokhan (2016), the learners should reach a degree of half-conscious use of strategies.

Vygotsky, one of the most meaningful contributors to the understanding of the sociocultural nature of our learning (Vygotsky, 1971) claims that self-regulation is an outcome of mediation. Oxford (2017) agrees with Vygotsky and adds that in language, a more capable other provides mediation through spoken dialogues with the learner. She claims that it is sometimes important for the teachers or any more capable others, to break down the learning task into small parts. Oxford (2017) further adds that for weaker UAS, mediation is essential. Nothing that they acquire or do unless specifically told to should be expected or taken for granted.

Some more research conducted over the years has demonstrated a difference between GLL and UAS in the way they use learning strategies (Porte, 1998; Vann & Abraham, 1990), the frequency of using learning strategies (Green and Oxford, 1995; Dreyer and Oxford, 1996; Kyungsim and Leavell, 2006) and the amount of strategies

used by the learners (Griffiths 2003, 2008, 2013). All these studies have agreed that strategy use leads to successful language learning but, strategies should be orchestrated and integrated so they work well together (Anderson, 2008). Griffiths and Gokhan (2016), add to this argument that it is necessary to see the learning strategies as part of a bigger picture that should also include the learner's individual characteristics, like in the case of UAS, the learning goal and the learning context.

Furthermore, in a meta-analysis conducted by Gardner, R.C. and Masgoret, A.M. (2003), motivation was determined as the dominant correlate to achievement. Cheng and Dornyei (2007) agree that motivation is one of the key factors which determine success in second language acquisition. Their study was a sequel of an empirical study conducted by Dornyei and Csizer (1998). While the latter asked Hungarian EFL teachers to evaluate a list of 51 motivational techniques, the former was held in an Asian context, namely in Taiwan. The 10 most important motivational macrostrategies from both studies inspired the five top most important motivational macro-strategies for UAS teachers, concluding that motivating students should be the first goal of a teacher who wishes to enhance EFL competencies. Thus, when teaching UAS, the teacher's role is to mediate, orchestrate and integrate the strategies, working in small portions, explicitly introducing and explaining every act, and to enhance motivation.

The main consequences of this literature review are first that studying a foreign language has major impact on all students more specifically EFL studies have an important role in the success of the UAS. Furthermore, the intervention programs have achieved to advance UAS to a higher level of competency in EFL, thus providing access to higher-education.

The questions that still remain are these: Do the intervention programs, with EFL studies as a leading challenge for both teachers and students, have long term impacts on the UAS? Are these UAS, by successfully passing the 4 points English BAGRUT, motivated to pursue further education, in college or university and thus promote their job opportunities and further success in life? Have they changed their attitudes toward higher education and perception of academic self-efficacy by achieving a higher level of English proficiency? What do UAS who do apply and study at any higher-education institution think?

Answering these questions will hopefully close the above mentioned gap, through the following philosophy and methods which were found to best address this goal.

3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This study examined language acquisition within the educational system and its long-term effects on the individual. Therefore, methods from both linguistic and educational research are brought fore to mold the most fitting methodology for this study. The mixed methodology allows using more than one style of research, which lends itself well to the focus of this study, as is presented in the following chart:

Re-search stage	Research approach	Research aims	Research tools	Research population	Data analysis methods
1	Qualitative research	1.To understand the linguistic implications of teaching EFL to UAS. 2.To assemble and compile pedagogic methods of enhancing EFL to UAS.	Structured interviews.	15 experienced EFL high-school teachers- at least 10 years in the system- who have taught both UAS and GLL.	Qualitative interpretative analysis + quantitative summative analysis.
2	Quantitative research	1. To measure the effectiveness of intervention programs in enhancing EFL to UAS 2. To measure the extent of influence the higher level of EFL had on the decision of UAS to enroll in higher-studies. 3. To measure the influence of a higher level EFL on the academic self-efficacy of UAS.	Closed-ended questionnaires	162 participants (111 females, 51 males) who had graduated high-school at least five years ago, divided into: <u>The test group:</u> 97 participants, ages 21-35, who received an intervention program in high-school to enhance their EFL level. <u>The control group:</u> 65 participants, age 21 and above, with no intervention program.	Quantitative Statistical Analyses
3	Qualitative research	1. To get a deeper understanding of the intervention programs as perceived by graduates. 2. To learn more about the influence these programs have had on the participants' decisions to continue to higher-education and on their academic self-efficacy. 3. To triangulate the results of the questionnaires.	In depth interviews	13 high-school graduates from an intervention program enhancing EFL, who had participated in the a.m. questionnaire.	Qualitative interpretative analysis.

Table 3.1. Research Design

Recent researchers in linguistics and education refer to a continuum of qualitative/quantitative approaches and even relate to a Holistic Research Approach (Litosseliti, 2018). Joseph Yeager and Linda Sommer of Sommer Consulting, Inc., Newtown, Pennsylvania, emphasized that:

"Language is behavior, not merely about behavior"

(Yeager & Sommer, 2007, P. 569)

This means that language and behavior are intertwined and influence each other. Therefore, encouraging UAS to enhance their studies of English has a greater target which is: aspiring to modify behaviors of students and not purely explain them. Yeager & Sommer (2007) suggest that statistical results do not explain behavior or motivation, nor do they have cause-effect detection. Statistics, they posit, furnish us with inference, in order to get closure.

This understanding is further supported by sociolinguistics arguing that fundamental aspects of human interaction and social behavior are symbolically represented by language (Wolfram, 2012). Interpersonal relations, they claim are affected by the relations between language and society. Following this sociolinguistic approach, in today's global world it is even more important to be exposed to English, the lingua franca, and be able to interact properly everywhere around the globe.

Yeager & Sommer further suggest that motivational issues are issues of cause and effect, which is the essence of the linguistic research strategy, which:

"...identifies the mechanism behind the choices made by the targeted individual or group of people" (Yeager & Sommer, 2007)

Are the higher-level competencies of EFL that mechanism behind the UAS that encourages them to strive for further success and boosts their academic self-efficacy?

Finally, Yeager & Sommer (2007), posit that for change in behavior to occur, three universal ingredients should be involved: motive, opportunity, and measures. Obviously, in this research the UAS in the intervention programs of MABAR and /ETGAR classes have a motive: to successfully pass the higher level of EBE, granting direct access to higher-education. The intervention programs are their opportunity and the measures are the special approaches and teaching methods the teachers use.

Therefore, the first part of this study deals with the measures used by the EFL teachers of UAS and their perceptions.

In a similar fashion, in the educational system the first and foremost aim is to bring upon impact, or change. According to Dixon, L. Q., Zhao, J., Shin, J. Y., Wu, S., Su, J. H., Burgess-Brigham, R., ... & Snow, C. (2012), the field of educational research and evaluation has undergone significant change in shape, substance and style. The educational system used to accept and understand progress as shown by final numerical results in tests as well as the quantity of students that can naturally be measured only numerically. Yet it has gone from almost purely quantitative methodology, using achievements as the ultimate tools, to qualitative methods such as observations, interviews and documentary reviews (ibid).

According to Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2003), this paradigm is the emancipation of individuals and groups in egalitarian societies. It inquires how schools perpetuate or reduce inequality, and what behavior in social society should entail. The second part of this research examines the long-term change imposed on UAS by the higher-level of EFL achievements, which were made possible by the intervention programs.

3.1 Research Design

The case study style was adopted for the first part, establishing the measures, which is concurrent with Yeager & Sommer (2007) findings, i.e.: a tool box for the EFL teachers of UAS in MABAR and ETGAR classes. This will be combined with the ex-post facto style for the second part, used for examining the long-term effects on the participants who had graduated these classes.

1. **The Case Study:** Case study research excels in bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. It seeks for significance rather than frequency. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. In the present study, 15 distinct 'events' of EFL teachers are presented, each one with his/her unique way to approach and teach UAS. These were all analyzed and compared to extract all possible relevant details. Considering that the teaching of EFL is not a new subject and that many papers have been written on the matter, this study can add

soundness to the former existing knowledge, establishing a wide range of methods to form one common tool box for EFL teachers of UAS.

The Case Study design is not without critics, nevertheless, researchers continue to use the case study research method, with success, in carefully planned and crafted studies of real-life situations, issues, and problems.

2. Ex-post facto research: examining data **retrospectively**. It is a procedure that is intended to transform a non-experimental research design into a pseudo-experimental form.

According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2003) this research design can be described as experimentation in reverse: starting with a group that has undergone a change in a specific area, and then the causes for this change are being studied.

In this study, an inquiry is made, calling the participants to look back in retrospect, and examine whether their perceptions and attitudes were influenced by the level of their English achievements.

Further, ex-post facto research is particularly appropriate when simple cause-effect relationships are being explored (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003). Thus, the direct impact of the 4 points EBE achievements are the cause and the effect is transition to higher-education and academic self-efficacy. The purpose of the study is to find out whether the high-school UAS, who successfully passed the higher level of English examinations, on one hand feel the growth in their academic self-efficacy and on the other have taken the next step and enrolled in a higher-education institution.

The criterion-group, or casual-comparative model, describes the investigation of the possible causes of a phenomenon- the transition to higher-education and academic self-efficacy, as stated above. This model compares the participants in which the variable is present, with other participants who lack it. That means that in this study, the high-school graduates are divided into two major groups:

Group A: a group of high-school graduates, who studied in a MABAR/ETGAR class, thus underwent an intervention program. This group is further divided into 2 sub-groups:

A1: the group that has successfully passed the 4-point EBE;

A2: the group of students who had not accomplished the 4-point EBE
(Those who ended up with 3 point EBE).

Group B: a group of high-school graduates, who studied in a regular or advanced class, and did not receive any intervention program.

These groups are compared in their transition rates to higher-education and the perception of their academic self-efficacy. It is this criterion-group, or casual-comparative model, which allows for the discovery of what, might trigger UAS to change their perception and attitude toward higher education.

Consequently, the most suitable design for achieving the goals of this research is a combination of the case study method with ex-post facto models. Where the case study method is used to augment and strengthen the existing knowledge of enhancing EFL to UAS, and the ex-post facto model to question the cause-effect relationship, for UAS, between the enhancement of the EFL level and their perceptions of higher-education and self-efficacy.

3.2 Research Tools

3.2.1 Questionnaires:

Questionnaires were distributed to post UAS high-school graduates.

162 participants (111= females, 51=males) replied to the questionnaires.

Objective: to collect information as to the accomplishments of each student since they had graduated high-school.

Fitness for purpose: obtaining a quick, massive response (n=162).

The questionnaires were divided into three sections as follows:

- I. Parts A requested for general, personal details relevant to this study.
- II. Parts B, C and D asked for the potential influences on the participants' motivation to continue to higher education.
- III. Parts E and F interrogated the academic self-efficacy of participants.

The age of the participants was a relevant factor primarily in group A where the age was limited to 21-35. (Due to the compulsory army service in Israel, most students do not reach higher-education before the age of 21(The Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018), and the limit of 35 years was set since the intervention programs that

encourage UAS to raise the level of EFL only started about 17 years ago). In group B there was no age limit.

The questionnaires were used to answer research questions 2 and 3 (section 1.3), and were constructed mirroring Bandura's academic self-efficacy questionnaire and his Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997).

The questionnaires were designed to have mostly closed ended questions, which are straightforward, leaving no room for subjectivity of the researcher. The answers can be easily entered into a computer database after being coded numerically, which helps form quantitative statistical analyses (Dornyei & Taguchi, 2010).

The numerical options in the answers to parts E and D, are on an even scale of 1-4, thus avoiding the "comfortable middle" (Fluid Surveys Univesity, 2010), where it is important to obtain a clear cut picture from the participants. On the other hand, for part C, the replies are on an odd scale of 1-5, which allows for the comfortable yet significant midpoint in this case.

To make the questionnaire whole, two open ended questions were added, aiming at enriching the information gathered. As recommended by Dornei and Taguchi (2010), open questions can lead us to identify information we did not anticipate, or provide us with necessary information.

The connection between the level of the EBE and transition to higher education was examined using the chi-square test, performed for non-dependence. The connection between the level of the EBE and transition to higher education, when the variant of studies is measured on a three units scale- graduation from high school, BAGRUT certificate, first degree studies- and the variant for EBE level is on three levels of 3, 4, and 5 units of EBE, was examined conducting the Spearman Correlation Test.

3.2.2 Interviews

Interviews were used in two cases and for two different purposes-

i. In response to questions number 1 & 2 (as perceived by the teachers).

Fifteen EFL teachers of both GLL and UAS were interviewed. All teachers interviewed had at least 10 years of experience teaching EFL to both GLL and UAS. **The objective** was to understand the teaching methods that EFL teachers have accumulated through the years and practice with UAS.

Fitness for purpose: obtaining an exact answer for the inquired information.

The teachers were asked to share their opinions / methods of the following issues:

1. The challenges of teaching a class of UAS;
2. The challenges of teaching EFL to Hebrew speakers.
3. Special ways to prepare and teach the following skills in a class of UAS: reading and listening comprehension; writing; speaking; grammar; pronunciation; vocabulary.

The information obtained from these interviews was transferred and divided into a chart according to the different skills. The intention was to discover the most successful methods in teaching EFL to UAS which are used most frequently, have assisted the UAS achieve higher results and are recommended by the EFL teachers. The findings are arranged in the chart according to the order of frequency, thus the methods which are most commonly used by the highest number of teachers are presented first and that which are used least come last. For each method the percentage of teachers using it was calculated. This means that the results of the interviews, which are a tool from the qualitative paradigms, were calculated from the chart and given a numerical value, which is related to the quantitative paradigm. This is another way to mix the methods even when analyzing the findings within the tool of interviews.

ii. In response to questions 2 (from the graduates' point of view) & 3

Another interview that was conducted is one that supports and expands on the data obtained by the questionnaires. This interview was held with 13 young people who had graduated high-school and were part of an intervention program, i.e. they were placed in either a MABAR or ETGAR class in high school. All participants in the interview had answered the questionnaire. The opportunity to ask more specific and profound questions in a personal face to face interaction shed light on very important points. These interviews were analyzed in the traditional way.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

Having concluded on the MMR, the interpretations and results of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms were woven together through analysis, to form a solid, strong and genuine tapestry.

One major reason for mixing methods and methodologies is for the sake of validity and reliability. If the research is not reliable and cannot be validated, then it has no merit. As Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2003) claim, validity is a requirement for both qualitative and quantitative research. They further argue that each research paradigm has its own specific and diverse instruments for validation: the qualitative through honesty, depth, richness, the participants chosen, triangulation and objectivity of researcher. The quantitative paradigm, on the other hand, requires professional, statistical calculations, the right tools, and the proper sampling. In this study, the above criteria suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison are addressed, having the right sampling group of participants, i.e.: the graduates from the MABAR and ETGAR classes, and the experienced teachers of EFL. Both are analyzed while the former are also compared to the control group of high-school graduates who did not receive any intervention program, with as much honesty and objectivity as possible.

3.3.1 Triangulation

Validity and reliability are the two essential components of a successful study. There is no pretense to reach 100 percent of validity, but through triangulation, this goal can be achieved at its best (Trochim, 2002). Wiggins (1998), adds that the use of multiple forms of perspectives and evidence brings-fore a truer and more accurate picture. In this study a between-method triangulation was exploited, using interviews that are identified with the qualitative method, and questionnaires from the quantitative method, as the data collection tools that support and reinforce each other.

3.3.2 Sampling

Many factors, such as time, accessibility, budgeting issues and more, do not allow researchers to examine the whole population, which is why sampling is required. As much as the choice of proper methodology and instrumentation affects the strength of a study, so does suitable sampling. It is of vast importance to carefully choose the group of participants, and as early in the planning process of the research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003), that will provide the appropriate responses to the questions of the research, thus forming the sampling of the study.

3.3.3 Generalization

In spite of having focused on Hebrew speakers in this study, the issue of acquiring a foreign language is of interest not only in other countries as well, but also in Israel

with the Arab speaking population and with the countless new immigrants coming from a diverse set of countries. This study can most probably be generalized and used with very little adaptations with other populations in Israel and with other graduates all over the world.

3.3.4 Researcher's Objectivity and View Point

The last factor in determining the reliability and thus the validity of a study might lie in the degree of objectivity of the research in the study. The famous German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche explains that whenever the subject of research encompasses human life, the researcher, no matter what, is totally involved in the research (Frugal, 2009). Taking this statement into account, careful consideration was given to the presentation of the research tools to the participants and to the interpretation and analysis of the findings. The interviews are structured and the questionnaires are close ended intentionally. The interviewees had the freedom to respond without any authority imposed on them. In addition, 83 percent of the questionnaires were delivered by the internet or randomly to college students in one of their classes. This way the influence of authority (the researcher) was minimized so that the obtained replies were as objective and as genuine as possible.

3.4 Ethical-Considerations

The participants in this study are all humans therefore, on top of objectivity and the level of involvement of the researcher, the requirements as established by law (Belmont Report, 1979), were respected and followed:

- All participants were informed of the purpose and intentions of the study, and each participant was given a serial number to keep anonymity.
- This research was done in retrospective thus, no risk or harm can be imposed on any participant.
- The participants were selected randomly, answered the questionnaire or the questions of the interview only out of their free will and without any authority imposed on them.

FINDINGS

4.1 Part One: Qualitative analysis of the findings - The Case Study

In response to the first research question - *What are the linguistic implications and methods for teaching EFL to UAS?*

The teachers were asked to share their opinions and methods on the following topics:

1. The challenges of teaching a class of UAS;
2. The challenges of teaching English to Hebrew speakers;
3. Special ways to prepare and teach the following skills in a class of UAS: comprehension from written text and from spoken language; writing; speaking; grammar; pronunciation; vocabulary;
4. The belief of each teacher as to the significance of achieving a 4 unit EBE for UAS.

The findings were translated into occurrence rate for each method suggested by the interviewees, in order to find a common denominator between methods. Thus forming a generalization that can be applied and offered to all teachers working with UAS, more specifically when teaching them EFL and even more precisely, when teaching EFL to Hebrew speaking UAS, as illustrated by the following drawing:

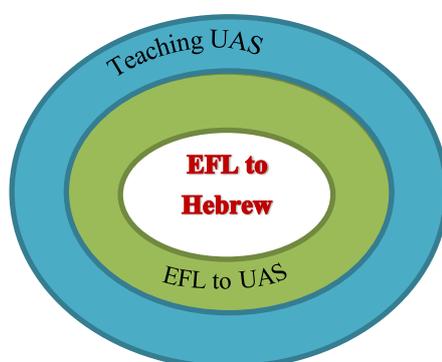


Diagram 4.1 Under-achieving Students

From the first questions in the interview, emerged both the needs of the students who are UAS, and of the teachers who teach in these classes.

It was very clear to see that 87% of the teachers claim that UAS have a motivational issue when compared to GLL. This result fully agrees with the literature review (section 2.3.3) in which Cheng and Dornyei (2007) and Gardner, R.C. and Masgoret, A.M. (2003), acknowledge motivation as the key factor in learning a language. These studies encourage the establishment of the following 5 macro-strategies for teachers:

1. Set a short time interval in your lesson plans for motivation talks.
2. Set a personal example with your own behavior by executing everything you say or plan with the students on time, down to the little details.
3. Promote learners' self-confidence and independence by giving positive feedback every lesson to every student, recognizing students' effort and celebrating their success.
4. Create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom by presenting the lesson plan at the beginning of every lesson and making the students feel they are in control of their learning.
5. Present tasks properly. Make sure the students understand your directions by asking them to explain the instructions back to you.

The novelty and unexpected findings that emerged from the interviews were that there is no specific counseling for EFL teachers of UAS. The homeroom teachers of UAS do have a counseling program (as reported by T3) but the other teachers working in those classes do not. Teachers feel the need for guidance and for a curriculum that is adapted to the population of UAS both in terms of the topics being presented and the length of the assignments. Thirty-three percent of the participants believe the texts themselves should be broken down into smaller portions not simplified. T13 and T15 mention that the topics in both course books and the texts used on exams are distanced from the content world of these youngsters, which further disconnects them, making them feel detached from the language.

Some teachers mentioned the lack of modern technological facilities which could be very useful for the teachers and assist in presenting materials to students, and at the same time, much more attractive and compelling to the students themselves.

Other challenges reported by the teachers that should be addressed: availability of the students, both physically and mentally; narrow mindedness; difficulty in seeing the whole picture; short attention spans; over-crowded classes (teachers suggest a maximum of 15 students to allow closer individual attention).

The next skill that was found to be deficient was the spoken language. Potentially due to the shift in emphasis mainly being towards reading comprehension, not enough

effort and attention is being given to the oral skills and competencies of the English Language. Some might claim that the previous statement might soon have to be modified since in our current technologically advanced world, with the intrusion of the mobile phone and computer connectivity, we are facing a shift from spoken communication to written/read communication. Yet, spoken language is still the primary, basic skill in acquiring a language. Teachers of highly populated classes may be more inclined, because of comfort and ease, to assign a task in which students have to read quietly and answer questions individually, keeping every student occupied, thus 'under control', giving the impression of a more disciplined class environment. In addition, most standardized tests in Israel do not have an oral component at all, and teachers unfortunately only teach what is on the test. Only the final BAGRUT has a very limited part which is tested separately and is worth 20 percent of the final grade. There have been attempts in the last few years to encourage more oral activities and to initiate testing of the oral competencies, so far with little results. Therefore, some teachers do not even bother teaching oral competencies per se (like T6 and T15), and others have reported on the methods they use.

Putting together the findings, the following "five 'S' formula" is instituted. This five 'S' formula encompasses the main recommendations derived from the findings of this part of the study- the interviews with EFL teachers of UAS:

- Support – form a 'teachers of UAS community' and support your students;
- Sociolinguistic attitude – connect words to their world;
- Size – work in small portions;
- Spiraling – repeat and proceed.
- Speak – use the language to communicate orally.

In response to the second research question: *Are the intervention programs in high-school perceived as effective in enhancing the level of EFL?* - All the participants in this case study agreed that these intervention programs are significant for UAS, they enhance their academic self-efficacy, and are of major influence in succeeding in the higher levels of EFL. The EFL teachers participating in this case study had no doubts as to the pedagogical impact of these programs.

4.2 Part Two: Quantitative Analysis of the Findings

In response to question 2 and 3:

2. Are the intervention programs in high-school perceived (by graduates), as effective in enhancing the level of EFL?
3. a. Was the level of English studied in high-school a factor in considering higher-education studies?
b. Did it have any impact on the student's academic self-efficacy?

4.2.1 General data:

1. There is a significant difference between the test group (with 55%) and the control group (with 100%) in the number of graduates who have direct access to higher-education by successfully passing the 4/5 units EBE.
2. There is a significant difference in the number of graduates from the control group, who enroll in higher-education (with 95.4%) and those from the test group, the UAS (with 74.2%).
3. There was no significant difference between the control group and the test group in their perception of the economic status at home at the time of their high-school studies.
4. There is no significant difference in the parental versus maternal education between the groups. Not surprisingly, among the test group one-third of parents enrolled in higher-education, while in the control group more than one-half did.
5. The average age of the participants in both groups correspond with the average age of the central bureau of statistics of Israel.

4.2.2 The effectiveness of the intervention programs:

1. The number of UAS who finish high-school and are entitled to the BAGRUT certificate is growing, from 60% in 2010 to 74.2% in this study.
2. The number of UAS students who enroll in higher-education, in spite of having graduated high-school with 3 units EBE, is slightly higher (76.2%) than those with 4 units EBE (72.7%), but this difference, surprising as it might be, is not statistically significant.
3. There is a significant difference in perception of the intervention program between students in the test group who had finished high-school with 3 units EBE and those with 4 units EBE in favor of the latter.

4. There is dependency between the class the participants had attended and enrolling in higher-education. In other words, students who were in special classes with intervention programs attended college or university in lower numbers than graduates from regular classes.
5. There is a dependency between the class in high-school and the level of EFL.

4.2.3 The impact of 4/5 units EFL

1. There is no dependency between the level of EFL and enrolling in higher-education.
2. There is no significant difference in academic self-efficacy between the test group and the control group and no significant difference within the test group. i.e.: UAS who graduated high-school with 3 units EBE and graduates with 4 units EBE did not show significant gap in their academic self-efficacy.

4.2.4 Past perception of higher-education and EFL

1. There is a significant difference between the test group and the control group in the way they perceived higher-education and the importance of a higher level of EFL when they were in high-school.
2. Within the test group, there is a significant difference between graduates with 3 units EBE and those with 4/5 units EBE in their perception of higher-education when in high-school and the importance they gave to learning EFL on a higher level. But, since there is no difference in rates of attending high-education between UAS with 4/5 units EBE and their peers with 3 units EBE, it can be concluded that the perception of higher-education in high-school does not influence the decision to enroll in higher-education.
3. There is no difference in the perception of the influence of a higher EFL level on the future studies, between UAS who ended up with 3 units EBE and those who were entitled to 4 units EBE.

The quantitative findings brought fore in this part of the study arouse many interesting points for discussion which are presented in the next section. To obtain a more complete and reliable picture, these findings are compared with the findings from the in-depth interviews with some of the graduates that are presented hereinafter.

4.3 Part Three- Qualitative Analysis of the findings

The most outstanding finding from the interviewees is their appreciation and positive memories of those involved in the program. It is clear that most of the interviewees think very highly of the intervention program and value its contribution to their success in EFL.

Finally, all interviewees report on the implications the higher-level of English has had on their adult lives. Even those who claim that the intervention program was not significant, report on the difficulties of not having acquired a higher level EFL and of the extent to which it had held them back.

4.3.1 The findings for question no. 3A

The assumption that the EFL level affects the decision to enroll in higher-education was confirmed by only six of the participants (46%) who absolutely agreed that their success in the 4/5 units EBE highly encouraged them to continue to higher-education, and one participant (8%), who claimed that the 4/5 units EBE encouraged him/her quite a lot, thus 54% of the participants agree with the influence of the level of EFL in high-school on their decision to enroll in higher-education. The remaining 46% argued that the higher level of EFL did not encourage them to higher-education at all.

Thus according to these findings the assumption that the level of EBE is a significant factor in the decision to enroll in higher-education cannot be proven beyond any doubt. There is only a slight majority in favor of its significance; therefore, when comparing with the findings of the questionnaires, this assumption must be refuted.

4.3.2 The findings for question no. 3B

The study question as to the impact of a higher-level of EFL on the graduates' academic self-efficacy was confirmed by 8 participants claiming it has influenced them very much and 3 more participants who reported it had quite a lot of impact. That means that 85% of the participants in this interview believe that the level of EFL has a strong impact on their academic self-efficacy. This result unequivocally proves the assumption that EFL levels influence the academic self –efficacy.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This three-part mixed-methods study has been designed to examine the influence of the intervention programs that enhance linguistic competencies on under-achieving students (UAS), on their perception and attitude towards higher-education and academic self-efficacy.

Based on the findings of this study, consistent with the review of literature, it is possible to assert that there is a relationship between the intervention programs, higher linguistic competencies and academic-self efficacy. Hence, the premises of this study is that the special classes with intervention programs for UAS in high-school motivate growing numbers of UAS to higher-levels of EFL, which in turn positively influences their perception of their academic self-efficacy.

It can be illustrated by the following diagram:

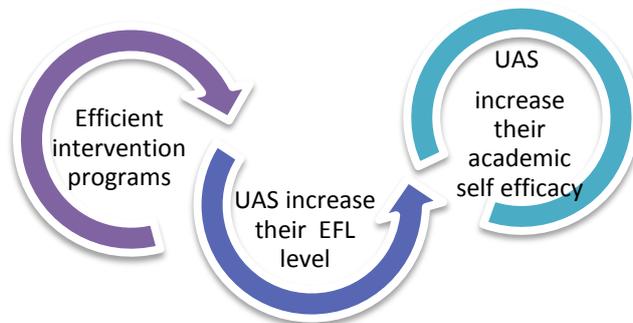


Diagram 6.1 Impact of Intervention programs

The findings of this study express that the concept of intervention programs is the correct pedagogical remedy for UAS students. It provides the appropriate conditions for UAS to prosper and succeed in high-school. The gradually increasing numbers of success proves that there is an ongoing process that is progressively accomplishing to encompass a wider range of the student population on the UAS spectrum. The ongoing growth also conveys stability, which must be the derivative of persistency and hard work over the years.

Furthermore, the method of having special classes for UAS, for the advantage of the UAS, was found to be the correct pedagogic approach and needs to be properly supported for the benefit of all who take part in it, students and teachers alike. The findings demonstrate that there is a correlation between success rates and positive perception of the intervention programs among the students. The intervention programs had a major and significant role in encouraging and supporting their

students, to boost their achievements and performance in the requirements for the final BAGRUT certificate in general and in particular on the higher-level of EFL. This fact further strengthens the ambition to encourage and lead students in these classes to accomplish success. It may be concluded that these special classes grant UAS the positive experience they had missed in their former years of their schooling within the normal education system. Therefore, since the educational system in Israel and most around the world have populations of UAS, the concept of special classes for UAS should be generalized, in Israel, to other groups of students and adopted as common best practice by others countries.

It should be noted that this process has not been in place for very long, since its inception was only back in 2007, after the compulsory law of education was established. It is a dynamic process that is evolving and adapting to the needs of the field, the main goal being scaffolding and providing UAS with the right tools to start their adult lives as equal members of society.

The results of this study suggest taking this process one step further. So far the UAS have been given the chance to learn EFL at a higher level, as their GLL peers have. It is now time to realize that enhancing EFL provides the means to be more competitive candidates for higher level positions hence, providing a better quality of life. This is accomplished by providing the necessary tools, strategies and methods for the students in order to develop and advance in the modern world thus opening the doors to social mobility and progress. These tools, strategies and methods positively influence the students attitudes that can fill them with the right amount of self-efficacy which ultimately will motivate them and allow them to compete with their peers in the future job market. In this study, the concept of consistent support and instruction for the teachers of UAS is strongly emphasized to boost their motivation thus allowing these teachers to more confidently heighten the motivation of their UAS. This should be translated into action by establishing school communities of teachers for UAS students in every school with MABAR/ETGAR classes, in the following innovative model.

The literature reviewed in the first chapter of this study agrees with the findings of the interviews in that the first and most significant component that has to be stimulated is motivation (Oxford, 2017; Dornyei & Csizer, 1998; Chen and Dornyei

2007), that teachers to UAS should perform as mediators (Vygotsky, 1971; Oxford, 2017) and need mediation themselves, and that there is not enough training and support for teachers of UAS (Ciaccio, 2004). The participants in the interviews also testified that they lack tools to cope with the challenges they encounter in many situations, which then brings upon frustration. Even well experienced teachers who do not have consistent support and guidance might become frustrated and disheartened with their students.

Finally, sociolinguistic awareness should be enhanced amongst teachers and students. It was presented by Weisler & Milekic, (2001), and can even be taken back to 1922:

“The Limits of my language mean the limits of my world”

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1922)

Moreover, a recent study conducted by Dr. Vera Kitaev (2016), staff member at the Kinneret College in Israel, shows that both the motivation and the performance of students who had been exposed to the sociolinguistic, cultural and historical background of the materials studied rose significantly (Kitaev, 2016).

In response to these needs, the teachers who have UAS classes or who have UAS in their classes must work collaboratively. This collaboration will emerge with the establishment of a school community of teachers for UAS. This community will form a more unified front where all the teachers will be using the same language, the same approaches and methods, which will help the students, better understand what is expected of them. These meetings should discuss and address the needs of both teachers and students, how to increase the motivation of the students, how to persevere and not become frustrated with the process knowing that it is a long road and finally, to be encouraged by both their colleagues and an experienced trained instructor. Raising motivation is crucial and will help solve many other problems, such as attendance, disengagement, cooperation, and more. At the same time, by forming this support community, the teachers will have a place to vent about and share their experiences with each-other ultimately strengthening their commitment to teaching the UAS. When all teachers use the same tools and language, the UAS will be able to transfer from one discipline to the other, inculcating these tools and turning to an added value for their future academic lives. All parties involved will benefit.

The school community should meet on a weekly basis for one academic hour, for 30 hours in total. Every third meeting the teachers should divide according to their disciplines and work with their proficiency instructor. For EFL teachers, the tool box compiled by this study may contribute and narrow the gap manifested by the EFL teachers of UAS. It is suggested to hold a sequential study, about five years after these suggestions have been implemented, to examine the effectiveness of these tools and the satisfaction they grant to all those involved.

Seeing this happen may grant satisfaction among policy makers and the teachers involved, knowing they are bestowing the necessary equal opportunities to a diverse population.

It must be noted that in this study, a relationship between the higher levels of EFL accomplished by growing numbers of UAS and the transition rates to higher-education could not be established. The statistical findings show that there is no connection between the level of EFL and transition to higher-education. Hence, this study failed to provide an answer to the reason why young Israeli women and men pursue higher-education. Several factors were examined as possible alternative explanations, but this is a complex issue that is beyond the scope of this study. Provided this limitation, an interesting sequel for this study could therefore delve into the elements that motivate young people to transition to higher-education.

Furthermore, on a conceptual level, the impact of the intervention programs on transitions to higher-education, as indicated by the rates of students in this study, cannot be compared with former rates, because there were no data. It can be assumed that seventy-four percent of UAS that transitioned to higher-education is a significant and impressive number, considering their starting point in high-school. These numbers call for a larger comprehensive study, in which the full mass of students applying to all academic institutes in Israel will be counted, to capture the entire picture of the amount of UAS who continue on to higher-education. This would completely close the gap in knowledge that this study was successful in providing a partial and initial reply for, i.e.: the long term influence of the intervention programs for UAS.

Finally, this study has captured the influence of EFL studies on the academic self-efficacy it provides to its graduates, and on their long term decision making. This

seems like a very critical outcome that solidifies the importance of the intervention programs in enhancing EFL levels to UAS, not so much because of the higher competencies of the English language that they convey, but rather for the skills they instill in their graduates and promotion in self-efficacy they provide to UAS. Policy makers in Israel should nurture and support all teachers involved in these classes, fostering UAS' teacher-communities, to provide them with the best tools to promote these programs. Other policy makers around the world are more than welcome to adopt the idea of gathering UAS in special classes as practiced in Israel to promote their UAS population to higher levels as well. All this is possible and successful as long as the teachers receive an effective tool box and the right goal to fight for, like the one EFL provides for in Israel. A goal that can be characterized as bridging the divide between having or not, direct access to higher-education.

For all the above to transpire, policy makers in general and more specifically the Shachar Wing of the Ministry of Education in Israel, should resume its vital role and once again place substantial attention to the special intervention programs and provide direct support administered to the classes under its supervision.

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