

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions, Limitations, Implications and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The conclusions derived from the study are outlined below.

Firstly, a diary study can sensitize teachers to the different needs of the students.. Diary studies can also be used to gauge students' receptivity towards the lessons. Knowing what matters most to the students can help teachers make decisions regarding the class more effectively. It helps teachers decide how and when to depart from the lesson plan. A diary study is a tool which promotes personal and group reflection. They help evoke hidden feelings.

Secondly, there is evidence that affective factors play an important role in language learning. The study shows that students display emotional reactions towards different elements in the classroom i.e. the activities, their peers and the teacher. Thus, it is important that we be aware of the various affective factors which might surface in the language class so that we can manage the learning processes better.

5.2 Limitations

The limitations of the study are firstly, as the diaries involve subjective data, and are based entirely on the students and teacher's perceptions of their experience, generalization of the findings to other learners and environments is precluded.

The variable quality of data from different informants is also a limitation. The diary entries, as mentioned earlier on, are generally short and lack elaboration making guesswork a necessity when interpreting the data.

Next, the generalizability of the findings of such study is limited as it is highly context dependent. It is only applicable within the context of the study. In this case, the context is that of adult language proficiency learners.

It is subject to all the problems associated with qualitative data analysis e.g. the definition of categories, the open-ended nature of the data, reliability in coding and interpretation.

5.3 Implications

5.3.1 Implications for Teaching and Learning

As mentioned in chapter one, one reason why this study is carried out is to enable the researcher to improve her teaching practice. Thus in this section, the implications of doing this type of study on teaching and learning is discussed. Some advantages of conducting a diary study for the teacher are listed below.

5.3.1.1 Advantages of Conducting a Diary Study for the Teacher

1. Becomes aware of what parts of classroom processes are considered important by students.
2. The use of diaries allows the teacher to gain access to different perspectives as students can sometimes express themselves more easily in writing than speaking.

3. Teachers can find out what students think they have been doing in class, what they think they have learned.
4. The guesswork in the class is minimised and teacher can feel more confident that what is taught closely parallels what is learned.
5. Appreciation of individual differences.

5.3.1.2 Advantages of Conducting a Diary Study for the Students

1. Students become more attentive to what is happening in the classroom.
2. By writing their reactions, students review what was covered and what they think was learned thus deepening the learning process. For instance, Ren (student number 8) begins to develop awareness of language learning strategies and process.
3. Students get opportunities to feel involved in the running of the class through giving feedback.

5.3.1.3 Implications for Further Research

The following issues could be further researched:

1. Students' perceptions of overt and covert teaching of grammar.
2. Students' receptivity towards drama as a learning method.
3. The use of songs in the language classrooms.
4. What promotes collegial feelings in the classroom?

5.4 Recommendations

The study has been able to unveil the minds and hearts of the learners. Some were willing to “bare their souls” while others only let ajar the door of their inner self. Nonetheless it was a revealing experience, where the varied perceptions of each lesson suggests a need for sensitivity towards the different needs and preferences of the learners. There appears to be a real need to treat each learner differently. There seems to be a need to accommodate learner differences to tap their inner potentials to learn a language. If we are able to reach into their hearts, the battle is half-worn. In this small class alone, treating each learner as an individual and giving him/her a chance to share her/his views about the classroom processes has improved the motivation to learn a language. Students capitalise on different aspects of the classroom processes to learn a language. An awareness of what makes each student tick will help us teach and learn better. A ‘thick’ description of the classroom will certainly help us understand the learners better. Thus, it is recommended that more classroom-based using the diary study method be carried out so that we can get a ‘thicker’ description.

Secondly, it is also recommended that more studies be carried out to determine the role of affective factors in language learning.