**CHAPTER III**

**METHODOLOGY**

1. **Presentation**

This chapter presents information about the research design, the context, the participants of the study, the materials used to collect data, data collection procedures and the data analysis.

* 1. **Research Design**

Naturalistic research design was employed in this study. Naturalistic research is part of ethnographic research that purposes to analyse and understand things as they come out in their naturalistic settings. In other words, it is often used to gather evidence on language learning and used where the data is gathered in genuine classrooms through observations. Steven and Shirley (1995, p. 263) state that ‘‘during the past decade research in English education has seen an increased use of ethnography to document the teaching and learning of English language arts in classrooms and other naturalistic settings. At its best, ethnography can provide researchers, teachers, and other educators with rich documentation of learning as it unfolds and varies over time, leading potentially to insights into cultural patterns, formulation of hypotheses for testing, and support for generation of theory’’.

The major tool of the naturalistic research is observation. The researcher gathers the significant information during the observations of the classrooms. She takes notes and designates the students’ performance on the activities in the natural setting.

Fraenkel (1993) summarizes five characteristics of naturalistic research. These are: first, the researchers are not only concerned with process; they are concerned with product as well. Second, the researchers would like to analyze their data inductively. Third, the natural setting is a direct source of information and the researcher is the key tool in this research. Fourth, the main concern of the researchers is how people make sense out of their lives. Finally, the major data is gathered in the form of pictures or words rather than numbers.

In this research study, according to the needs and interests of the elementary students, some activities from the course book were changed and applied in the elementary classes. The researcher did observations to evaluate the students’ performance on these communicative activities and collected feedback from them to obtain realistic data. In addition to this, the researcher observed what kind of materials and activities were used to teach the language and the students’ behaviour and reactions during the lesson. The teaching methods were also evaluated during the observations to see whether they were beneficial in learning and teaching the language. The researcher tried to understand what happened naturally in the classroom rather than test a hypothesis about a cause and effect relationship.

* 1. **Context**
     1. **The Preparatory School**

Near East University (NEU) is one of the English-medium universities located in Nicosia, North Cyprus. Students who are accepted to NEU sit for the Proficiency Test in order to be able to study in their departments. If they do not pass the English language proficiency examination, they have to study in Preparatory School. The Preparatory School provides language instruction to students to prepare them for their departmental studies. According to their language levels students are placed into preparatory first (elementary) or preparatory second (pre-intermediate and intermediate) classes. Students are offered language instruction in the elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. Each level has a seventeen-week study program consisting of twenty contact hours per week. Students sit for four tests and one final exam to move to the next level. The minimum study period at Preparatory School is one term and the maximum study period is two years.

There are 38 instructors teaching in the Preparatory School. Most of the instructors completed their degrees in English Language Teaching (ELT), English Language Literature (ELL) or English Literature and Humanities (ELH), attended different internationally recognized teacher training courses such as CELTA and DELTA. Thus, most of the instructors working in the Preparatory School have gained language teaching qualifications. Most of the instructors have experienced teaching at all levels from elementary to intermediate. Some of the instructors at Preparatory School have attended MA programs offered by departments at different universities to further their education in their field of study. Therefore, they are aware of the approaches and methods used in language teaching all over the world. The instructors in the Preparatory School also prepare teaching materials but they do not use different language teaching methods and techniques.

The student population of the Preparatory School is about 1000. The majority of the students at NEU are from Turkey. Most of them have a little knowledge of English to study in their departments. The Preparatory School prepares students for their departmental studies by providing them with English courses. Students sit for the English Proficiency Test at the beginning of the academic year and according to their language levels, they are placed into different levels.

In the Preparatory School, the elementary students use the Face2face (2005) course book, a material pack and supplementary booklet prepared by the instructors. A yearly syllabus is also followed by the instructors on a week to week basis. The syllabus (see Appendix A) includes grammar topics and materials that are separated into teaching skills and a material pack. There is also a syllabus to follow for each week. The instructors should use the course book exercises and supporting materials from the material pack.

The course book is mainly grammar-based and has few communicative activities. The materials and the activities in the course book are designed on a structural basis that focuses on how language is formed rather than how it is used. In other words, students learn language forms but they do not learn how to use them. Nowadays, materials are designed to compensate for the lack of some language points, some skills and strategies needed by the students. The purpose of these materials is to assist students to use language outside the classroom and develop autonomy. Moreover, instructors use their own materials to assist students to get engaged in communicative activities.

The educational purposes of the Preparatory School are to provide students with language instruction and prepare them for the English exams at the end of each term. Thus, there is not enough time to practise all language skills sufficiently. Both students and instructors focus on tests. Some of the skills are ignored and grammar becomes the centre of attention due to the English Proficiency examination. There are only 32 hours out of 320 hours spent on the speaking skill in the Preparatory School syllabus. Therefore, it is very difficult for students to use all the given speaking activities in the limited time. The students have to take the elementary speaking test given at the end of the course at elementary level. Therefore, the instructors only focus more on speaking towards the end of the course at elementary level. As a result of this, the elementary level students finish this level without adequately having enough practice in speaking.

* 1. **Participants**

The participants of this study were fifty elementary and fifty pre-intermediate and intermediate level students and thirty-three instructors teaching at elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate level in the fall and spring semesters of the 2007 and 2008 academic year at NEU Preparatory School.

Data about the students’ gender, age, year of learning English, native language, year of graduation from high school and proficiency level in English Preparatory School were collected from the students through questionnaires.

As illustrated in table 1, there were 100 students who participated in this study.A closer look at the participants show that, there were 45 male participants and 55 female participants in total. According to the table below, there were 86 students within the 17-20 age group and 14 within the 21-25 age group. On the other hand, there were 33 students in the 1-3, 10 students in the 4-6 and 57 students in the 7-over years of learning English. As shown in the table below, there were 97 Turkish, 1 Bulgarian and 2 Arabic students who took part in this survey. The information on the year of graduation from high school has also been divided into 2 groups. The number of students who graduated between 1998 and 2002 was 8; on the other hand, 92 students graduated from high school between 2003 and 2007. Last but not least, there were 50 elementary and 50 pre-intermediate/intermediate students who participated in this study.

**Table 1**

***Background Information of Students***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Background Information of Students*** | | | | |
| **Gender distribution** | **Gender** | **Male** | **Female** |  |
| Number of students | 45 | 55 |  |
|  |  | | | |
| **Age distribution** | **Age** | **17-21** | **21-25** |  |
| Number of students | 86 | 14 |  |
|  |  | | | |
| **Distribution of the years of learning English** | **Years of learning English** | **1-3** | **4-6** | **7-over** |
| Number of students | 33 | 10 | 57 |
|  |  | | | |
| **Distribution of native language** | **Native language** | **Turkish** | **Other** |  |
| Number of students | 97 | 3 |  |
|  |  | | | |
| **Distribution of the year of graduation from high school** | **Years of graduation from high school** | **1998-2002** | **2003-2007** |  |
| Number of students | 8 | 92 |  |
|  |  | | | |
| **Distribution of the proficiency level in English Preparatory School** | **The proficiency level in English** | **Preparatory first** | **Preparatory second** |  |
| Number of students | 50 | 50 |  |

Data about the participant instructors’ gender, age, date of graduation, native language and years of teaching experience were collected through teachers’ questionnaires.

As it can be seen in table 2, there were 33 instructors who participated in this survey. Out of 33 participants, 31 of them were female and 2 of them were male. According to the table below, there were 9 instructors between 22-25, 13 instructors between 26-30, 1 instructor between 31-35, 3 instructors between 36-40 and 7 instructors in the 41 and over age group. The teachers who participated in this study graduated from various universities in different years. The number of teachers who graduated between 1983 and 1987 was 2, 5 of the teachers graduated between 1988 and 1992, 1 of them between 1993 and 1997, 11 of them between 1998 and 2002 and 14 of them graduated between 2003 and 2005. As demonstrated in the below table, 19 teachers had Turkish, 11 teachers had English, 1 teacher had Bulgarian and 2 teachers had Russian as their native languages.Years of teaching experiences have been divided into four main categories. According to the above table, 10 instructors had 1-3, 10 instructors had 4-6, 4 instructors had 7-10 and 9 instructors had 11-over years of experience.

**Table 2**

***Background Information of Instructors***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Background Information of Instructors*** | | | | | | |
| **Gender distribution** | **Gender** | **Male** | **Female** |  |  |  |
|  | Number of instructors | 2 | 31 |  |  |  |
|  |  | | | | | |
| **Age distribution** | **Age** | **22-25** | **26-30** | **31-35** | **36-40** | **41-over** |
|  | Number of instructors | 9 | 13 | 1 | 3 | 7 |
|  |  | | | | | |
| **Distribution of the date of graduation** | **Date of graduation** | **1983-1987** | **1988-1992** | **1993-1997** | **1998-2002** | **2003-2005** |
|  | Number of instructors | 2 | 5 | 1 | 11 | 14 |
|  |  | | | | | |
| **Distribution of native language** | **Native language** | **Turkish** | **English** | **Other** |  |  |
|  | Number of instructors | 20 | 10 | 3 |  |  |
|  |  | | | | | |
| **Distribution of the years of teaching experiences** | **Years of experiences** | **1-3** | **4-6** | **7-9** | **11-over** |  |
|  | Number of instructors | 10 | 10 | 4 | 9 |  |

* 1. **Materials**

In this research study, two questionnaires, students’ feedback forms and observations were used as a means of data collection.

**Questionnaires**

The students’ questionnaires (see Appendix C) were given to ten instructors teaching at elementary level and ten instructors teaching at pre-intermediate and intermediate level. However, the students’ questionnaires were given to the same instructors but not the same students twice in the fall and spring semesters. Five students were selected randomlyby their instructors in each group. This means that there were fifty elementary students in the fall term and fifty students in the spring term.

The students’ questionnaire was written in both Turkish and English (see Appendix D). The students’ questionnaire consisted of two main parts and one part at the end for suggestions, comments or criticism. In the first part, there were questions about the students’ gender, age, years of learning English, native language, year of graduation from high school, proficiency level in the English Preparatory School and specialist department. In the second part, there were four main headings for collecting information about various issues. The first heading was about the aims of students in learning English. There were 4 statements in this part. The second heading was about the learning and study habits of students. There were 9 statements about this heading. The third heading was about the students’ opinions about the teachers’ way of teaching. There were 13 statements in this part. The fourth heading was about the students’ opinions about preferences, expectations and believes. There were 12 statements about this heading.

The rest of the questionnaire consisted of five-point Likert scale in which participants were asked to indicate their responses to what extent they agreed with each statement. The scale is from 5 to 1 in which 5 is very important/always/strongly agree, 4 is important/often/ agree, 3 is moderately important/sometimes/neutral, 2 is unimportant/rarely/disagree, 1 is entirely unimportant/never/strongly disagree.

The teachers’ questionnaires (see Appendix E) were given to thirty-three English language instructors working in the Preparatory School. It was prepared by the researcher to gather information about the effects of using communicative activities to enhance the speaking skills of elementary students. The teachers’ questionnaire was written in both Turkish and English (see Appendix F). This questionnaire consisted of two main parts and one part at the end for suggestions, comments or criticism. The first part was about general background information of the instructors. There were questions about the instructors’ gender, age, date of graduation, department of graduation, native language, years of teaching experience, other course/s they have taken so far, course/s taught this year and main textbook/s used in this course. In the second part, there were 45 statements for gathering information about the instructors’ opinions on observations.

The statements were mostly concerned with the experiences of the instructors. The rest of the questionnaire was formed by a 5-level Likert Scale in which the choices were always/strongly agree, often/agree, sometimes/neutral, rarely/disagree, never/strongly disagree. Therefore, the participants were asked to tick the appropriate column for each statement they agreed with.

**Communicative Activities**

The researcher selected the activities from the Face2face elementary course book and improved them as communicative activities. She used some extra materials in the elementary teachers’ book and modified some activities in the course book according to these materials. She made these activities communicative and implemented them to gather information about the elementary students’ overall performance on communicative activities by carrying out observation (see Appendix H) in this study.

**Feedback Forms**

A students’ feedback form (see Appendix G) was prepared by the researcher to get feedback from students after each communicative activity. In this form, there were five open-ended questions to collect data about the students’ opinions and reaction to the activities. It was given to the students at the end of each activity in the classroom. The students were asked to respond to the questions as to give their ideas and opinions about the activities. However, most of the students did not respond to the questions seriously and some students found the questions difficult to respond in spite of the fact that they were written in simple language.

**Observation Forms**

An observation form (see Appendix H) was developed by the researcher to obtain information about the students’ performance during the communicative activities. There were two parts in the observation form. In the first part, there was information about the teacher’s name, class, duration, number of students and main goal(s) of the lesson. In the second part, there were 7 headings about which the researcher recorded. These headings include type of activity, topic of the activity, materials, timing, language skills, the students’ attitude and teacher’s attitude.In this study, the researcher could observe a total of eight activities over a period of six lessons; one class was the observer’s own students, namely, PF-25 and the others were five different classes, namely, PF-21, PF-24, PF-27, PF-30 and PF-32.

* + 1. **Reliability and Validity**

For reliability and internal consistency, the researcher calculated Cronbach alpha as 0.846. The materials used for data collection were therefore considered to be reliable. For content validity, the researcher used both descriptive and expert rating methods. Each item on the questionnaire is a reflection of known facts. Experts were consulted to endorse each item.

* 1. **Procedures**

For the present study, the researcher first contacted the assistant director of the Preparatory School in order to inform him about the aim of the research and to obtain the necessary permission (see Appendix I) to conduct the research. As a second stage, after getting the permission from the director, the students’ questionnaires were administered to ten elementary class instructors in the fall semester and ten pre-intermediate and intermediate class instructors in the spring semester. The students’ questionnaires were given at the end of the class hour or during the break.

As a third stage, the teachers’ questionnaires were distributed to instructors’ offices to be filled in during breaks and the researcher was present to give information about the research and explain any unclear questions.

After respondents had completed the questionnaires, the questionnaires were collected and the data was entered into the computer on a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) spreadsheet to be analyzed.

As a fourth stage, the researcher developed the exercises from the Face2face elementary course book and prepared them as communicative activities depending on the needs and interests of the students and applied in the elementary classroom. During the application of these activities, the researcher carried out observations to obtain natural and reliable data about the students’ performance on communicative activities.

Finally, the students completed a feedback form that contained five open-ended questions after each lesson.

* 1. **Data Analysis**

The data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis of data was conducted by using SPSS for MS Windows Release 16.0.It was also used to find the frequencies that are necessary for the interpretation of the data. A frequency table was prepared to see what level the most of the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements. The Descriptive Statistics Test was used to find out the percentages and the frequencies among the different groups within each variable. The responses to the questionnaire were calculated and frequencies, means and standard deviations were computed. The Scale Reliability Analysis was conducted to find the reliability of the questionnaire. The analysis was done using the Alpha Model. The qualitative analysis was done through observations of communicative activities in the classroom, students’ feedback forms and observations of elementary students and their instructors in the classroom atmosphere.