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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD IN ENHANCING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S LEARNING : A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the Montessori Method in teaching English as a foreign language in per-schools and kindergartens located in Riyadh. The participants of the research included administrators and teachers who received Montessori training and from those who teach in Montessori schools receiving no Montessori training courses at all. Data included questionnaire, observation checklists and interviews. The analysis of the data reveals that the Montessori Method in its pure form is not being applied in our schools and, thus learning and teaching English as a foreign language in such schools is not better than the traditional schools. The results show that there is no difference between the students' achievements in Montessori schools and traditional schools in learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Montessori program, pedagogy, kindergarten, effectiveness of Montessori methods, traditional methods of teaching

Acknowledgement

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Montessori Method is based upon the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. It is initiated to create a joyful atmosphere for the child to learn. Dr. Montessori's principles of education were developed through intensive observation of children. She observed each stage of development and assured that each stage depends on the previous one. Her main concern is that education should prepare children for their future and should create productive members of the society. The effectiveness of this method will be explored with spotting extra light on its usefulness in learning and teaching EFL for young learners.

English learning is remarkably popular all over the world. This is clear through observing the increasing number of English schools for children and adults. Everyone around this world believes that English is an international language and can be the lingua franca between the people in any place in this world. Therefore, learning this language turns to be a necessity for anyone regardless his/her nationality, religion, or ethnic roots.

Teaching English is not an easy job, it needs patience and enthusiasm. Many teachers thought of various teaching techniques and used them as teaching

methods. Their usage of these techniques has a main goal which is to increase the motivation of the students. Take for example the way English is taught for young learners by using the Montessori Method. When the child is ready, he will be introduced to sandpaper letters which gives the child a "hand-brain" connection to the concept. As the child traces the letter, he hears the sound or the pronunciation of the letter. This will form a strong connection with the child's brain.

Many educators notice parents' interest in teaching their children the English language in an early age and their sincere wishes to offer their children best kind learning environment. Thus, some educators start to build private schools which promise of a good and special teaching-learning process to the students with qualified English language teachers.

The purpose of the study:

The purpose of the study is to analyze private schools kindergarten Montessori and regular methods through spotting the light on the achievements in learning English as a foreign language of Montessori school students and non- Montessori schools.

Statement of the problem:

This study addressed the difference between kindergarten Montessori program and non- Montessori program and their effectiveness in learning English as a foreign language. Many studies provide certain facts behind the effectiveness of Montessori as an educational

method, while others are not certain about its successfulness especially in teaching and learning languages. Unfortunately, there are number of public kindergartens here in Riyadh which offer no English program in their curriculums; as a result, many parents who are interested in the learning of English as a foreign language can only put their children in private schools, and from this point the competition starts between the private schools.

Significance of the study:

Although the Montessori Method was introduced by Maria Montessori around century ago, it is still considered as a remarkable pedagogy in the field of education. Many studies proved the positive results achieved through applying this method in enhancing the teaching- learning process. Most of these studies appeared and developed in the US as the Montessori movement received a boost in the US (Lopata, Wallace, Finn, 2005). Montessori as an educational method has appeared in Saudi Arabia, specifically in Riyadh in the last 10 ten years and introduced by a few number of private schools. These schools were established either by enthusiastic educated people who are deeply interested in the field of education, Montessori in particular, or by investors who are interested in developing and improving their financial status. Therefore, this study is concerned about four areas:

1- Help parents to determine if the pure form of Montessori is being successfully practiced or not.

2- The reader will be able to compare between how English is taught in both Montessori based schools and other regular schools. Hence, the reader can decide which one is more suitable and fruitful in teaching and learning English in specific.

3- The results of this thesis can be used as input and reference in the teaching- learning process, especially in teaching English using Montessori Method in Kindergarten and primary schools.

4- The findings of this research will be useful to the readers who are interested in analyzing the teaching-learning process of English in kindergartens and primary schools.

<u>Research Questions:</u>

1- Is Montessori Method thoroughly applied in kindergartens located in Riyadh?

2- Are the kindergartens following specific Montessori professional standards?

3- How is the implementation of teaching and learning English using the Montessori Method in kindergartens?

4- What are the results of teaching- learning process using the Montessori Method kindergartens?

5- What are the differences in language achievements between regular schools learners and Montessori based schools learners?

Delimitation of the study:

The study is limited to kindergartens, and more specifically for children aged 3 to 6 years. It is supposed to highlight the effectiveness of the Montessori Method in the teaching- learning process.

Definition of terms:

Montessori Method

The Montessori Method of education was initiated in Italy by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1906 to serve disadvantaged children (Linda, Irby, Brown, 2003). The Montessori education is a child centered approach. It represents an expensive choice in which costs for specialized teacher training and specific Montessori materials can seem to be out of one's reach. The Montessori teaching Method is rich supplement of natural and physical sciences, fine art, cultural studies and motor skills. Above all, Dr. Montessori's plan for peace of education consists of a major component which is a curriculum that deemphasizes nationalism." The big picture of the culture curriculum encourages the perspective that we are citizens of Earth first, and secondly America, Japanese, Polish or other nationalities." (Linda, Irby, Brown, 2003). As a result, the goals of the Montessori Method go beyond the boundaries of educational field to improve the

individual's social life and enable him/her to maintain respectful attitude toward all the people around the world.

Magnet schools:

Magnet schools are embracing the concept of district wide specialty schools. The magnet schools are public schools exists in the United States with specialized curricula or courses, such as math-science or performing arts programs or special instructional approaches. These kinds of schools are offered for elementary, middle and high levels. Such schools can be found in other places, such as specialist schools in Britain.

Traditional Methods of education:

The traditional methods of teaching are found in most if not all of the public schools in our country. They are mainly teacher -centered methods in which the teacher instructs and guides. They are conveyers of information. Traditional methods vary according to social and personal goals and perspectives. The teacher can adopt different kinds of methods in her classroom depending on the objectives of learning, students' knowledge and the environment. There are many kinds of teaching methods initiated over centuries ago and can be applied now a day by huge number of advocators, such as the application of the grammar -translation methods in our schools and universities and which place unbearable

burden upon the students' capacities and reduce their learning abilities.

Summary of the chapter:

This chapter is an introductory note to the whole research endeavor. Basically, it presents brief information about what is the study is all about, why it is undertaken, what are going to be investigated and the significance of conducting it.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

If you examine the field of pedagogy, you will face vast number of theories and practical pedagogies which are dedicated for both teacher and student. This research highlights one of the most striking methods in the world of teaching methodology and the world of human development. The Montessori Method introduced by Dr. Maria Montessori who was an Italian physician. She started her work at the turn of the 20th century. Dr. Montessori developed the 1st Montessori school in 1907 to serve children who were economically disadvantaged as well as children with mental deficiency. Her approach was a scientific and practical approach to facilitate early learning and to enhance the development of a good and effective person. From her belief that there is no human being is educated by another person, she initiated the evolution of her method. It was to create a prepared environment which allows the child to select activities hands-on learning and attractive materials. The successive educational environment would have to meet the needs of the growing individual at every stage. If we have environments that meet the changing needs of the growing individual, environments that supported the

evolution of human being throughout the stages or planes of development (Montessori, 1949). In fact, the idea of prepared environment introduced by Dr. Montessori came from her own actual observations of children.

The education of the child is of main concern to many educators. The success of the learning processes long after the hours and years away from the classroom. Dr. Maria proved that her ideas can provide the individual with continuous learning motivated from natural curiosity and love for knowledge. Since the concern and the spot is on the early childhood education because the Montessorian believe that children have exaggerated capacity and eagerness to acquire skills and information. Dr. Montessori set some goals behind her method. She believed that the child shouldn't be to fill with the facts from a pre-selected course of studies, but rather to cultivate his own natural desire to learn.

The objectives of the Montessori classroom are different from those created for traditional methods. These objectives can be fulfilled by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by his own choice rather than by being forced, and by helping him to perfect all his natural tools for learning, so that his ability will be at maximum in future learning situations.

The key word of Dr. Montessori's evolution is "absorbent", she compares the young mind to a sponge. It literally absorbs information from the environment. She

proved her hypothesis when she invited the people to observe the way in which a two year- old child learns his native language, without formal instruction and without the conscious effort which an adult must make to master a foreign language. In this case the child can learn through natural and interesting activities which enroll all the child's senses to investigate his surroundings.

Stewart (2001) argues that the Montessori Method shouldn't be taken as a trade mark. It means that not any school can call its self Montessori school. The same idea is mentioned by Mr. Seldin, whose organization serves as clearing house for Montessori information and promotion, he says that Montessori schools " were never designed to be a franchise operation, like McDonald's or Wendy's." Seldin's words remind me of some schools here in Riyadh which make a clear mix or integration between the Montessori philosophy and some other traditional methods. Being a Montessori advocator stipulates professional implementation for the method to reach the ultimate goals.

Many researches devoted to the topic of Montessori Method to education and mainly focused on preschool education. The preschool focus of Montessori Method is because the educators believe that Montessori's method has generally emphasized the delicate ages 3-6 years as extremely important in a child's cognitive development (Lillard, 2005). One study focused on preschool attendance and the development of literacy skills and phonological awareness (Vance, 2003).

The emphasis on the right implementation of the Montessori Method in schools is because it is expected to prepare the child to meet the real world with confidence and self-discipline which is supposed to be acquired in a prepared environment (Conroy & Bravo, nd). However, this method does not only participate in improving child's knowledge, but play a great role in building healthy personalities. " If children have learned to trust, by 3 years of age, they will be able to employ all their previously developed skills and move out into the world, cutting those bonds, those same oedipal apron strings" (Schimamberg, 1988).

The Montessori educational syllabus is not merely a subject list. Montessori divides the educational syllabus into five parts, practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language and cultural enrichment. In this study I am concerned with the language and how can Montessori Method obtain successful out comes in teaching and learning the foreign language.

Meanwhile, the question about the effectiveness of the Montessori Method in learning English as a foreign language is still controversial. There were number of studies conducted during the last decades, however these studies did not reach a complete evaluation of its effectiveness and efficacy (Schonleber,2006). The philosophy of Dr. Montessori in teaching and learning languages is quite obvious; she believes that the sensorial tools and materials play a role in learning the language. She believes that teaching and learning the language should start from improving listening

skills and gradually move as the child's potentials grow to other skills like writing and then reading. In this case the philosophy of the Montessori Method is quite different from other methods which endeavor to improve the language by the integration and the activation of the basic skills. Richardson (1997) argues that multisensory language curriculum is described as a useful instrument for teaching writing and reading. He also states that Montessori developmental approach teaches phonological rules which build writing and reading skills. Besides, the philosophy of Dr. Montessori states that Montessori education should introduce early levels of philosophy into programs through imagination, rational thought exercise which is in fact contradicting with the direct and abstract ways of the traditional approaches. Nevertheless, the Montessori Method was criticized by many educators as a rigid method, though many others believe in the effectiveness of the sensorial experience in the development of the intellectual abilities of the child. Khan (2003) states that the language program is supposed to begin with readiness activities in which the child is allowed to move to a state of physical and mental readiness before formal language exercises are introduced. These activities can appear as matching cards, stories, poetry, listening games and other preparatory activities.

The learning process of language skills is basic area of education in which Montessori methods have been

proven to be highly successful in advancing students' understanding (Vance,2003; Rodriguez; Centofanti, 2002; Ibeji, 2002). Another study suggests that Montessori with its focus on attention and the early development of the literacy skills is useful for boys who usually show more problems in attention and reading that do girls (Lillard, 2005). The researcher highlights the lack of this attention of focus on such skills in the traditional schools and which make Montessori Method more effective in comparing to traditional methods.

Moreover, the aspect of social life is clearly reflected in the Montessori classroom. There are number of activities that the child goes through which enable him to develop true ' social feelings', such as the exercise of courtesy help children control their bodies and move from gracefully which giving them courtesies of social life. The 'please' and 'thank yous' denote distinguished manners (Montessori, 1917). The non-competitive and free atmosphere is a belief reflected in Montessori classroom. Add to that, the Montessori teacher usually uses no rewards or punishments. There are no textbooks, worksheets, tests or grades. It is mainly based on cooperation. The Montessori teacher has a faith deeply inside that every victory and every advance in human progress comes from some inner coercion (Montessori,1967).

Another striking point is that in Montessori vision the acquisition of spoken language, social attitudes and behaviors are all absorbed by the infant effortlessly

from experience within society's first representative, the family. As the child grows his language developed and enhanced by the participation in the expanded social atmosphere. Other argues that "Maria Montessori was among several international educators who influenced the education system and, more specifically, the development of nursery schools" this is a shifting point in the field of preschool education system.(den Elt, van Kuyyk,& Meijnen, G. W. 1996).

Many researchers and educators have been busy in defining the role of the Montessori teacher and its significance in the process of teaching and learning. The role of the Montessori teacher is quite challenging. There are many roles that the teacher has to fill in a perfect way starting from preparing healthy and rich environment for educational purposes and ending in spreading the feeling of enthusiasm among students to enhance the process of learning. Craine (1992) indicates that the teacher should believe that children will freely choose the tasks that meet their inner needs and this will enhance many skills; among them the development of human potentials. Some authors suggest that the role of Montessori teacher differs from the role of the non-Montessori teacher. The non- Montessori teacher's role can be easily predicted as she/he works as an instructor and authoritarians, dictating to students how to behave and what to do. (Harris & Callender, 1995).

The differences between the teacher's roles also indicate a difference of the learning outcomes from the

sense that the achievements of Montessori students will differ from the achievements of regular methods students. Many studies conducted that the Montessori Method is much more useful than any other teaching or educational method, while others are typical proponents for the traditional methods. Beyond these studies, some proponents have made additional assertions regarding the effectiveness of the Montessori programs. For instance, Pickering (1992) argued that Montessori programs help students to increase attention, organization, order, visual and auditory perception, written language skills, fine and gross motor skills, mathematics skills and personality. Nevertheless, there were some educators who highlighted the lack of empirical support in Pickering's study regarding the areas positively affected and the claim that Montessori materials have been scientifically validated.

There are a few number of researches that compared between the Montessori students' achievements and non-Montessori students. Additionally, these studies lack comparison between groups, statistical controls and empirical testing for group comparison. Seldin (2002/03) claimed that much of existing researches have a lot of methodological weaknesses and limited terms of age range. However, others conducted that in their study whether students in a Montessori school out performed non- Montessori students using standardized measures of math and language arts. The focus was on the 4th and 8th grade students in Montessori schools were compared to

students in structured magnet in a large urban district. The previous study asserted that students in Montessori schools had higher language arts and mathematics achievements than students in magnet and traditional schools. They also clarified that gender was related to language arts achievements. Female students' achievements were higher in both 4th and 8th grades. All in all, the results were mixed and failed to support the general hypothesis that Montessori students demonstrate superior academic development and achievement, such as Daux, 1995; Dawson, 1997. In short, this study proved that Montessori students are similar in their achievement comparisons to students from traditional and magnet schools.

After having this theoretical view about the philosophy of Dr. Montessori which is clearly depicted in her method, it is quite important to shed some light on the traditional method used in ordinary classrooms and its role in the acquisition of English as a foreign language. The traditional classrooms are based on competition. It gives no attention to social skill development and transmission of societal values which shape the traditional educational system (Kendall, 1993). The teacher has the authority over the class with intensive usage of drills and practices in order to develop different micro skills and curricular proficiency. Instructional materials regularly include textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, and students complete assigned work at their desks. A strong emphasis is placed on structured classrooms and discipline, including consequences for modifying inappropriate behavior.

For the time being the Montessori schools are central topic of discussion especially for those who are interested in new evolutions in the world of learning. Therefore, I thought of studying how far this method is effective in the learning of EFL here in Riyadh. All the Montessori schools and preschools are private schools. In addition to emphasizing the effectiveness of this method, this research will also focus on the quality of preschool education in general.

Summary of the chapter:

This chapter traces number of published papers, articles and dissertations that pertain to the effectiveness and the implementation of the Montessori Method in the field of education in general and in teaching EFL in specific.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLGY

A qualitative research design is selected for this study. The researcher intends to use comparative method to determine common themes and issues as data collection is proceeding at each setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Participants:

This study was conducted at eight kindergartens schools in Riyadh. The eight schools are divided into two sections: four of them are Montessori- based schools and the other four schools are traditional schools. Since the English program is not available in public kindergartens, the conduction of the study was restricted to private schools only. Each school was contacted by phone first through principles and they were told that the study involved a several hour site visit for the purpose of interviewing and giving questionnaire forms. Two schools were chosen to fill the observation forms by attending English classes.

Data Collection:

For the purpose of the study, questionnaire form sheets were distributed among the participants. The questionnaire form consists of 23 questions. The questions examine the degree of purity in applying The Montessori method by asking about the professional Montessori standards that the school follows. It is also asking about the training courses that the Montessori teachers already have and the conditions of hiring Montessori teachers. Six questions are specified to ask about teaching English styles and the development of young learners' second language. Additionally, as a research study the researcher intends to study the effectiveness of the Montessori method in teaching and learning, then comparing it to traditional method by attending English classes. The students were observed more than once in different settings in order to obtain a full and accurate picture about the students' performance and achievements in the English classes. Moreover, individual interviews were conducted with some of the schools' principles and English teachers.

Data Analysis:

The process of the data analysis is recursive in which the researcher notices, collects, thinks and then writes a report. It is called recursive because one part can call you back to the previous part. The aim of this process is to reconstruct the data in a comprehensible style (Jorgensen, 1989). Alternatively, this process will help the researcher to compare and contrast the things he/she has noticed and then draw certain analogy and differences between the collected data.

Basically, the data will be analyzed by first scanning the responses and then checking if the questions are all answered or not. The researcher will describe the basic features of the data, for example what is the proportion of people answered each question. The analysis of the classroom observation will be based on observing the sample, make generalization and then comparing the performance or behavior of the children in Montessori-based school to the children's performance in non-Montessori school.

Triangulation:

Triangulation means mixing data types which is often expected to help in validating. Additional data were collected to confirm the validity. Brief interviews were conducted with three principles of Montessori schools. Theses interviews were conducted via phone.

Summary of the chapter:

This chapter is concerned with the selection of subjects and instrumentation for data collection. It also describes in some detail the method of data collection and method of data analysis.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter clarifies the findings for a study investigating the effectiveness of the Montessori method in learning ESL in kindergartens and pre-schools. The following questions were examined in this study

1- Is Montessori Method thoroughly applied in kindergartens located in Riyadh?
2- Are they following specific Montessori professional standards?
3- What are the differences between Students' achievement in general and in learning English in particular, in the Montessori schools and traditional private schools?

To answer these questions, the results of questionnaire form, interviews, and observation checklists will be analyzed. The investigation was concerned with the implementation of Montessori Method, teachers' training courses, children's activities, how the children are grouped and their academic and social achievements in general and in learning English in particular.

The participants' answers in the questionnaire and in the interviews indicate that there are 50% of the Montessori schools which follow certain professional standards in applying and practicing this approach such as AMS, AMI, or AMC which is changed now to ICME. On the other hand, there are 50% of Montessori schools in Riyadh which acknowledged that they are using their own standards. This means that they are not accredited by any professional organization. Moreover, 50% of the teachers in Montessori schools are not trained and the other 50% have taken several courses for not more than three months. Frankly, Teachers' understanding for the Montessori philosophy and their common understanding of their lesson planning and curriculum scope and sequence is essential to the success of the method. This result gives a clue about the expected failure of this method in the Montessori schools located in Riyadh. The experience that the teacher has also plays a crucial importance in the true implementation of this method. 25% the Montessori schools reported that Montessori teacher should not have less than two years experience, while 50% indicated that experience is not essential as they are focusing on the teacher's character and her skills as a key component. The other 25% put no conditions as they do not think that the teacher's experience and her personality will affect the process of teaching and learning negatively.

These diverse responses also appeared in the conditions set by Montessori schools for hiring pre-school teachers. 25% indicated that their schools

require no college degree or advanced education. 25% reported that they require advanced education with special training courses in Montessori. The other 50% indicated that they look for teachers who have graduated from educational colleges and specialized in kindergarten studies.

Concerning the classroom assistants and their role in kindergartens and primary schools, 50% indicated that they do not have teacher assistants   , while the other 50% declares that they do have teacher assistant in each classroom.

The daily routine in the Montessori schools also differs from school to another. 75% of these schools point out that they start every morning with breakfast at 7.30, 8-11 Arabic classes, then English class and finally the playtime. The other 25% of Montessori school do not have a fixed routine as it
Usually depends on what the teacher of the class is planning to present. For the English classes 25% of these schools give around 60 minutes daily to practice English using different materials, such as sensorial materials, while the other 75% of the Montessori schools specify 30 minutes daily to practice English using traditional approaches in teaching ESL. These results show that there is a real ignorance about the pure Montessori program or approach as an educational method. "Montessori noted that children seemed to have a work cycle consisting of three phases: order, feeling rested, and disorder. During a typical three-hour time frame, children would become orderly. At

this time, children would ideally complete what she called a "great work", an activity that might fully engage them for up to 90 minutes. After completing such work children would appear rested and re-energized, rather than tired and disorganized. They would then complete less focused activities, finally becoming disorganized in their actions."(Schonleber, 2006) This quote confirms that Montessori in its genuine form is not actually used and gives an indication that the administrators of these schools have no commitment to Montessori practice.

The number of the students in the classroom plays a role in the process of learning. 100% of the Montessori schools in Riyadh indicated that each classroom has from 25-27 young learners, and of the schools have mixed-age learners starting from 3-6 year.

The teacher's role takes important place in the process of learning and teaching. 50% of the Montessori schools believed that the teacher's role appears in creating a motivated atmosphere through organizing attracted environment. The 50% teachers are actually adopting the role of the traditional teacher, such as teacher-centered classes. Moreover, 75% of Montessori schools indicated that children are motivated to choose their own activities which they like, while the other 25% of such schools do not allow the child to select his favorite activities which is totally rejected according to the Montessori philosophy.

Usually children learn fast and there are certain skills which they can acquire easily. According the data 25% of Montessori schools indicate that children learn how to build blocks and how to paint easily. 25% pointed out that children can acquire communicating and social skills. 25% indicated that they can acquire language skills easily, and 25% showed that children can acquire social skills and language skills as well.

The prepared environment is a basic condition for any Montessori school to achieve its goals. The motivated environment has to be created by the teacher as an important factor for the process of learning. As appeared in the observational data, 50% of the Montessori schools in Riyadh acknowledged that they create motivated atmospheres by giving their feedback to the child when he/she does any achievement. For example, saying good job, clap for him/her and etc. On the other hand they tend to punish the child if he/she commits something wrong.
However, 25% of these schools believe that the motivated environment is drawn through an organized beautiful environment, and through the teacher who is closely observes the children's demeanor and focuses on providing internal motivation by giving the learners work that is one step higher than their level yet attainable. The last 25% pointed out that they tend to create motivated environment through providing the children with interesting and attracted materials which they can use in their activities.

Teaching English as a foreign language using the Montessori Method has different strategies in comparing to the traditional methods of teaching EFL. According to the participants' answers and response in the questionnaire and interviews, 75% of the Montessori schools are applying the traditional methods of teaching English to their students. Although the Montessori Method has its own style for teaching languages, some teachers acknowledged that they are taking the traditional methods for granted in the process of teaching and learning EFL. 25% declared that they use phonics and whole language, as well as, conversations sessions throughout the day. These systematic works are mainly concentrating on phonics "letters and sounds" along with multi-sensory approach to teach phonics in circle time everyday which will build the cornerstone for the skills of reading and writing. Only 25% of these schools are using Montessori multi-sensory approach to teach phonics and link it to project theme, such as space, take out the letter from large movable alphabet and group repetition and review. Such kinds of activities are designed for children from 3-6 years.

The parents' role should not be excluded from the process of education. They play a crucial role especially in the early years of the young learner's life. The results of the questionnaire form showed that 75% of the Montessori schools acknowledged that they have certain policy to inform the child's parents about his/her problems and progression. Additionally, 75% also agreed that some of the parents do not

collaborate effectively with the school in elevating the level of their children; therefore the teacher is expected to face certain difficulties in rising up the child's level. On the other hand, 25% of these schools showed that they neither have a specific policy for informing the parents about their children's progression, nor an attendance policy to check with the parents their child's absence or tardiness. Only 50% indicated that they follow an attendance policy as well as policy for tardiness. They reported that if the child exceeds 5% absenteeism or 20% tardiness, they call a parent conference to discuss the effects on the child.

The same questionnaire forms were given to non-Montessori schools and I came with the following results. 25% of traditional schools pointed out that their schools are based on Montessori Method which gives an indication of a clear misunderstanding and ignorance in the educational approaches in general. As for hiring teachers, traditional schools have certain conditions. 75% of these schools ask for more than 5 years experience in the field of teaching, while 25% of traditional schools ask for no less than two years experience. Additionally, 75% of these schools have specific requirements for employing pre-school teachers, such as college degree and advanced education, while 25% of them stated that they have no requirements at all. As for English teachers, these schools do not require college degree, but a good English speaker.

These schools have daily routine. 75% of these schools indicated that they start the day with exercise, circle time, work time, snack, outdoor time (play time), arts, dance and then preparing the children to go home. 25% of these schools reported in an interview that they do not have specific schedule for the pre-school level.

Concerning the facilities in traditional schools, 75% indicated that the building is supposed to be attractive as any private school. These buildings usually have kitchen, play area, garden, library, and large classrooms.25% of these schools acknowledge that they have adjustable classrooms with play area only.

Traditional schools have certain attendance policies. However, the results of this study showed that 75% of these schools do not restrict their students with attendance policy. Yet, 25% of these traditional pre-schools do have attendance and tardiness policy. The principle of one of these schools clarified that they ask for parents' conference at the beginning of every semester in order to explain the school's policy for the parents and to attract their attention about the importance of such policies in accounting for the children's progression.

Unlike the Montessori classroom, the number of the students in the traditional classroom should not exceed 12. 100% of the traditional private schools

indicated that they number of the students in each classroom must be limited and their organization is according to their ages, for example from 3-4, and 5-6 are in separate classes.

The role of the teacher is absolutely clear in the traditional schools either private of public schools. The teacher is the guide; she/he directs the learning process in a whole group instruction. The students often follow teacher-directed work, unlike the Montessori classrooms in which the child spends up to 4 hours per day in selecting and practicing his/her favorite activities. Furthermore, the teacher in the traditional method is responsible about making and choosing the appropriate activities for the young learners. The teacher can use materials, such as flashcards, real objects, toys, textbooks, worksheets, cassettes, and video shows.

The results of this study showed that 100% of these schools agreed that motivation play important role in the process of learning. It develops the child's academic and social abilities and it helps in building his personality. Motivation in traditional private schools appears as gifts, praising words, and weekly parties. Punishment is not usually used especially with pre-school learners. In fact, the results of the study showed that these schools differ according to the skills that they focus on. 50% of them concentrate on social and motor skills by using different activities, while the other 50% focus on developing

the child's social skills, language skills, phonemic awareness, number recognition, and physical skills.

As for teacher assistants, the results of this study indicated that 75% of traditional schools provide each class with one teacher takes the responsibility of everything except for giving English classes, the English teacher gives 30 minutes class daily offering no assistance to the responsible teacher. However, 25% of these schools offer a teacher assistant in each class to help the teacher when it is needed.

The methods which are used by English teachers in traditional schools are quite known. The most popular one is the TPR (total physical Response). Through my visits and observations to the English classes in such schools, I found that 50% of the teachers know how to control their classes and it was clear that most of them if not all have a clear vision about the educational methods which are suitable for young learners. The other 50% of the English teachers are using different methods haphazardly with a limited knowledge about educational approaches.

The results of this study showed that the teacher can notice the child's second language improvement through daily conversations with her/him. 75% of the teachers focus on the oral production of the child and neglect the other micro skills, while 25% of the teachers clarified that the child's language

improvement can be seen through observing his listening, writing, reading and speaking abilities.

The findings of this study show that there is a clear variability in how the Montessori Method has been implemented in the pre-schools and kindergartens in Riyadh. In addition, a limited knowledge about the pure form of Montessori Method is significantly clear. In short, the results of this study showed that there are no differences in between the achievements of the students in Montessori based schools and the students of the non-Montessori schools. The language achievements in particular are almost parallel and the children's social abilities were the same.

It is known that the Montessori program helps students to develop attention, organization, visual and auditory perception, written language skills, motor skills, and personality. Hence, 50% of these skills are not fully acquired in the Montessori schools in Riyadh. The child's progress should be reported accurately within a Montessori environment. The district's traditional report card needs to be supplemented with a card that that reflect the Montessori skills (Rodriguez, Irby, Brown, 2003).

The Montessori students' level in EFL is not better than students of traditional schools. Throughout the observation report, I realized that the child in traditional schools is able to hold the pencil, copy letters and color pictures, while the child in the Montessori school did not show better performance than traditional schools young learners. As for the reading

skill, children in both programs showed similar performance.

In the real Montessori schools the child can freely move and feel physically and psychologically comfortable. The so-called Montessori school which I have visited, I realized from the first glance that this classroom would not be a Montessori class. The children were in a circle looking at the teacher who was teaching them the use of propositions using a ball and a chair as instructional tools and asking the students about the position of the ball. The classroom contains 27 learners in a mixed-age organization. There were only two students participating with her and the rest of the students were listeners. In fact, children should have obligations and responsibilities to the community, including respecting another's space (Schonleber,2006); such behaviors were not noticed through the schools visits or even via the participants' answers and responses.

All the results assure that 75% of Montessori schools applied this method in a bizarre way. It would be a fact that the Montessori schools in any country would naturally reflect many of the cultural elements of that country, yet this does not give them the right to create their own standards in order to accomplish non- educational aims.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter carries the most striking points about this study. Data were analyzed following the qualitative method. The number of the results is vast, yet the main result shows that this study failed to support the effectiveness of the Montessori methods as an educational method in our pre-schools and kindergartens.

Chapter V

Conclusion

This study examined the effectiveness of the Montessori Method as educational method in general and its effectiveness in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in particular. The comparison between the Montessori based schools and traditional schools here in Riyadh helps to determine whether the pure form of Montessori is being applied or not. It also gives the chance to compare between the students' achievements and performance in learning EFL and to judge the effectiveness of the Montessori Method which is used in our schools.

Many researches acknowledge that the differences in practicing the Montessori Method in the Montessori schools cannot be hidden that is because the turbulent history of Montessori's diffusion throughout the world and the emergence of numerous Montessori governing bodies.

There are number of conditions or principles in the Montessori Method written by Maria Montessori to put clearer view about the correct implication of the method (Dresser,2000).

1- Observation

2- Demonstrate use of material

3- Allow child to work uninterrupted

4- Allow freedom of choice

5- Movement is associated with the activity

6- Materials isolate one concept

7- Activity has a clear goal

8- Activity stimulate the senses

9- Material is age appropriate and suited to the child's development stage and sensitive period

10-Activity progresses from simple to complex

11-Activity reflects real-life

12-Activity can be connected to the real-world

13-Acitvity supports child's interest

14-Activity support child's repetition

15-Activity supports child's self-correction

When the method is applied in its traditional form, students will definitely demonstrate superiority over traditional students in overall academic achievements.

In fact, many studies indicated that Montessori approach has shown significant success rates in helping to improve learning English as a foreign language (Harris,2004). Moreover, Rodrigues and others (2003) clarified that the Montessori curriculum is universal, and the instructional concepts associated with the Montessori material are the same. When the Montessori program is implemented in the child's second or primary language,

important tools for learning reading and arithmetic are developed early in a natural way, thus make their enormous contributions to children's ability to explore and learn. Any interested individual must know that when The Montessori Method is misapplied or partially applied the obstacles that result can be quite difficult to overcome. It is the educator's task to enlarge the people's knowledge and awareness about the real situation of the Montessori schools in our country.

All in all, this study failed to support the effectiveness of the Montessori Method and failed to confirm its superiority over the traditional methods in teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

Limitation of the study:

Given the small sample size and specific locations of this study, it cannot be generalized to other Montessori or non- Montessori per-schools and kindergartens.

Suggestions for further research:

A similar study on a larger scale along with a greater period of time would help to confirm or refute the findings of the study. It also might help to elevate the performance of the administrators and teachers of the Montessori schools and then the whole academic level of the students.

Qualitative studies on the effectiveness of learning English in Montessori pre-school setting would also begin to measure the effectiveness of using or borrowing some of the systematic works of the Montessori language sections

in order to improve the students' language skills through the process of learning EFL in the traditional schools.

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Name of school
_____
_____

Date
_____
_____

Answered by
_____
_____

Please kindly answer as much as possible of these questions. Feel free to express any idea you wish to highlight.

1- Is your school is a Montessori or more traditionally based?

_____
_____
_____

2- What kind of training do your teachers have?
- AMI course.
- MACTE course.
- IMC course.
- All of the above.
- None of the above.
- Other. Specify please

_____
_____
_____

3- How many years of experience do your teachers have?
- Around 2 years.
- More than 5 years
- Less than 10 years.
- None of the above.
- Experience is not required.

4- Does your school have classrooms assistants?
- Yes
- No

5- What are the conditions of employing pre-school teachers?
- Require college degree or advanced education.
- Require experienced teachers in the same field.
- Require specific training courses.
- All of the above
- None of the above.
- Other. If you choose this option please specify.

6- What is the daily routine in the school?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

7- What are the facilities in the school (classroom size, materials, and building)?
   - Small building
   - Large building

   Outdoor
   - play area
   - Garden
   - Kitchen
   Indoor
   - Classrooms
   - Play den
   - Library
   - Art Studio

   - Well-equipped first aid kit

   - Other (please specify)

   _____
   _____
   _____

8- Does your school have a special attendance policy?
   - Yes
   - No

If your choice is yes, please mention some of these policies.

1-

2-

3-

9- What Montessori professional standards do the school follow
   - AMI (Association Montessori International)
   - AMS (American Montessori Society)
   - MACTE (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education)
   - IMC (The International Montessori Council)
   - Other

10-   Does the school administrator have commitment to Montessori practice?
   - Yes
   - No

11-   How many children in each class?
   - Up to 7 learners.
   - Up to 12 learners.
   - Up to 18 learners.

12-   How are they organized?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

13-   What is the role of the teacher in the classroom?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

14-   Are the children in a mixed- age classes? If yes,
choose one of these options.
- From 3 months to 1 year.
- From 2 to 4 years.
- From 4 to 6 years.
- Other kind of distribution. Please explain.

_____
_____
_____

15-   Do young learners choose their own or favorite
activities?
- Yes
- No
   If No, what kind of activities do you offer the children?

_____
_____
_____

16-   How much physical activity do children get per day?
- 60 minutes. (1 hour)
- 30 minutes.
- More than 60 minutes.

17-   What are the skills that you focus on?
- Social skills.
- Motor skills.
- Both
- Other. Please specify

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

18-   Which skills can children from 3 to 6 acquire easily?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

19-   How can you provide a motivated environment for young learners?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

20-   Do you inform the parents about their children's
progress or problems? If yes, please explain.

_____
_____
_____

21-   What is the method used to teach English?
- Natural method
- Total physical response
- Story telling
- Other. Please explain

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

22-   How can you tell that the child's foreign language is
improved?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

23-   What are the activities you use to enhance learning English as a foreign language?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B

Interviews

These are revised interview questions for the key informants (Principles and teachers of Montessori schools)

1- Can I know your name?
2- What is your educational level?
3- How long have you been teaching using Montessori as educational method?
4- How would you describe the role of the teacher?
5- What do you think of Montessori as an educational method and how can you tell that it is
    Correctly applied in our schools?
6- Do you have commitment to Montessori practice?
7- What are the challenges you face in applying this method?
8- Is there anything else you like to add?

Appendix C

Observation checklist

Student _____Grade _____

Class/location observed (include teacher name) _____

Date of observation _____

Language (Oral Expression, Basic Reading Skills, Reading Comprehension, Listening Comprehension)
- ❑ Age Appropriate
- ❑ Has difficulty modulating voice (i.e. too soft, too loud)
- ❑ Has trouble naming people or objects
- ❑ Has difficulty staying on topic
- ❑ Inserts invented words into conversation
- ❑ Has difficulty re-telling what has just been said
- ❑ Demonstrates slow and halting speech, using lots of fillers (i.e., uh, um, and, you know)
- ❑ Mispronounces words frequently
- ❑ Has difficulty rhyming
- ❑ Has limited interest in books or stories
- ❑ Has difficulty understanding instructions or directions

Notes:_____
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_____

Reading (Basic Reading Skills, Reading Comprehension, Reading Fluency Skills)

- ❑ Age Appropriate
- ❑ Confuses similar-looking letters and numbers
- ❑ Demonstrates poor memory for printed words
- ❑ Has trouble naming letters
- ❑ Has problems associating letters and sounds, understanding the difference between sounds in words or blending sounds into words
- ❑ Has poor retention of new vocabulary
- ❑ Dislikes and avoids reading or reads reluctantly

Notes:_____
_____
_____
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_____

_____

_____
_____

Written Language (Written Expression)

- ❑ Age Appropriate
- ❑ Dislikes and avoids writing and copying
- ❑ Has difficulty remembering shapes of letters and numerals
- ❑ Frequently reverses letters, numbers and symbols

Notes:_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____
_____

_____

Social Emotional (All Areas)
- ❑ Age Appropriate
- ❑ Has difficulty 'joining in' and maintaining positive social status in a peer group
- ❑ Has difficulty with self-control when frustrated

Notes:_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____
_____
_____
_____

Attention (All Areas)
- ❑ Age Appropriate
- ❑ Has difficulty sustaining attention in work tasks or play activities

Notes:_____
_____
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_____
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Gross and Fine Motor Skills (All Areas)
- ❑ Age Appropriate
- ❑ Appears awkward and clumsy, dropping, spilling, or knocking things over
- ❑ Has trouble with buttons, hooks, snaps, zippers and trouble learning to tie shoes
- ❑ Creates art work that is immature for age
- ❑ Demonstrates poor ability to color or write 'within the lines'
- ❑ Grasps pencil awkwardly, resulting in poor handwriting
- ❑ Experiences difficulty using small objects or items that demand precision (i.e., Legos, puzzle pieces, tweezers, scissors)

Notes:_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____
_____
_____
_____

Other notes or observed behavior

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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