

Learning English Language in Authentic Settings: A Case Study with Foundation Level Students in Oman

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Abstract

This study explores factors impacting learning English Language through the implementation of an authentic task-based method, dubbed English Souk (or Market English), currently employed at a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Muscat, Oman. The present mixed-method study specifically aims to find answers to the following research questions: (a) How do General Foundation Programme (GFP) students assess the English Souk initiative? (b) What challenges, if any, do the English Souk participants face during the simulation of the activity? And (c) What impacts do they state the English Souk has on developing oral communicative skills in them? The results were obtained via questionnaires returned from 50 GFP English Souk participants as well as a focus group conducted with eight voluntary subjects which were mapped against the views of six GFP teachers. They revealed a high degree of common satisfaction amongst the student and faculty respondents with the aim and intended outcomes of the English Souk approach. They also uncovered how the innovative practice had a positive correlation with developing learners' language skills, irrespective of the challenges they faced during the enactment of the activity. Implication of these and other issues for further investigation are discussed.

Key Words: authentic assessments, authentic task-based materials, English souk, General Foundation Programme, innovation, oral communicative skills

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