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**INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES
PHD PROGRAM IN EDUCATION SCIENCES**

**THE ROLE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN THE
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE
(EFL) STUDENTS IN IRAQI UNIVERSITIES
(A CASE OF ISHIK UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY SCHOOL)**

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INTRODUCTION

General Background Information to the Study

Extracurricular activities (hence ECAs) are very important and play a great role in education (Holland & Andre, 1987). The research results indicate that extracurricular activities are as important for building social and academic skills as the regular classes (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). Furthermore, another difficult issue is to analyze this fact in Iraq-Kurdistan region government at educational institutions as it is on the way of being a well-developed country in the near future. Extracurricular activities are important in the EFL context in Iraq. Teaching English has a crucial importance for Iraq, because it is trying to build its statehood, and while doing so, it is important to have closer communication with the rest of the civilized world. This civilized world has chosen English as a means of communication. Subsequently, Iraq has to communicate with the West (European states and the US). As a matter of fact, people in Iraq have to speak English and learning English well is of crucial importance. Ishik University Preparatory School (IUPS) teaches English to learners in an efficient manner in order to achieve impressive results, but it must be supported by English language Teaching (ELT) professionals seeking new ways to improve English language teaching and learning with extracurricular activities which could be one of the most effective ways to support people through their studies.

Statement of the Problem

Based on lecturers' observation and experience, it is claimed that students do not fulfill their given homework completely or they copy their classmates' work at school in study period. This common problem causes delays in students' learning pace enormously. Secondly, some students who come from public schools to study at IU are in difficulty to write and read in the Latin alphabet. The fact that they use the Arabic alphabet in reading and writing and, consequently, they read and write words from right to left, causes problems while learning English. Thirdly, the major problems that EFL students encounter when learning a foreign language is in the field of productive, mainly writing and speaking, skills. Based on the education system in Iraq, students' achievement in all exams requires a rote memorization and it is a serious obstacle in learning a language. To overcome this problem more quickly and efficiently, students should use the language for out-of-class purposes. Thus, extracurricular activities can be implemented for students' academic achievement.

Purpose of the Research

This study aims to demonstrate the facilitating role of language-oriented extracurricular activities in developing language skills through applying certain types of activities, to define the concept of extracurricular activities correctly, to show the role of extracurricular activities in motivating students, to study the relationship between ECAs and student academic performance, to define what type of ECAs could be most effective to sharpen reading, writing, listening and speaking language skills, which aspects of language learning should be concentrated on, through which activities to study the issues and to disseminate information to a broader scholarly society, colleagues and students in order to improve EFL practice by implementing at IUPS.

Significance of the Research

This study emphasizes the significance of extracurricular activities, and focuses on their role in facilitating English language learning process in the academic achievement of EFL students. There have been lots of researches (Millard, 1930; Posner & Vandell, 1999; McNeal Jr, 1998; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles & Lord, 2005) done and articles written about the effect or importance of extracurricular activities in students' academic achievement and/or academic performance from different points of view, such as the effect of art, sports or music activities as ECAs in students' education and academic performance. In this research, ECAs will be investigated from the language-oriented application perspective, to improve language learners' academic achievement. Students in IUPS come from different backgrounds and the teaching way educators use in class sometimes does not work equally for all learners. Therefore, language-oriented extracurricular activities may be the repetition of formal education in a warm and open atmosphere among peers and guiding lecturers. Students may face new language learning approaches, while participating in the activities. While implementing the language-oriented extracurricular activities, many language teaching methods such as Audio-Lingual Method, Total Physical Response, the Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Communicative Language Teaching, Suggestopedia and Natural Approach may be used. For instance, Direct Method is used to get students involved in the target language application. ECAs that are conducted in English enable students to be exposed to the target language which leads them to achievement in language learning, and communicative language teaching is to enhance students' communicative competence. Students endeavor to reach it through games, songs and role plays.

Novelty

Many researches, case studies and articles have been written about ECAs' role in students' academic achievement in general or specifically for one subject, such as music, art, or sports, but there are only few studies about EFL learners at extracurricular activities' angle. The fact that nobody actually has studied language-oriented ECAs' role in language education for academic achievement in Iraqi context constitutes the novelty of the research. Tell Your Funny Joke Activity, Testing and Analyzing Activity, Giving Presentations about Unit Questions, Fun Reading and Retelling Activity, Listening Songs and Filling the Verses Activity and Essay Writing Activities are the main activities to use, in order to motivate students to learn English better in a limited time with good learning outcomes.

Practical Value of the Research

Existing knowledge about language-oriented extracurricular activities in the published articles is rather scarce. There might be a great number of activities to implement in preparatory school language program. There are ten types of activities demonstrated in the dissertation and they really work well to help students improve their language skills. Language teachers should develop their own extracurricular activities, reflecting on their practical use, and improve them.

This dissertation could be used by lecturers who teach practical or theoretical courses in EFL or ESL and designing the curriculum, stakeholders and curriculum developers may take into consideration the role of extracurricular activities for students' academic achievement.

ECAs will take students and lecturers from routine teaching and learning period to a warm and friendly environment and they will be beneficial for both students and lecturers in the field of motivation. In language teaching there are many techniques to be used. Students can learn with tasks that they do individually, in pairs or in group work. By extracurricular activities learners will be motivated and eager to learn.

Theoretical Value of the Research

The theoretical value of the research is underpinned by the researcher's attempt to introduce and institutionalize a new mode of teaching which is in line with modern pedagogy – student-centered learning; extra-curricular activities are not typically new in the process of teaching and learning, especially in language teaching methodology; however, extra-curricular activities support the trend of student-centered teaching and learning which vast scholarly literature (Kelly,

2004; Dalrymple & Evangelou, 2006; Gebhard, 2006; Kuh, 2007; Murray & Pianta, 2007) recognizes most suitable mode for a typically new type of student in the 21st century. As an innovative approach in Iraqi context, the pedagogy employing extracurricular activities should be substantiated by a solid theoretical basis; thus, the dissertation sought to build a theoretical framework which would create the logic and rationale for extracurricular pedagogy in EFL learning in English language classrooms in general and at higher educational institutions in particular. The dissertation outlined the existing theoretical knowledge on extracurricular activities worldwide and developed a logic for employing this teaching approach to ensure a meaningful teaching and learning aiming at supporting a language learner throughout his/her endeavors.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the researcher's personal knowledge and experience, plus what has been found through literature review is an informed guess that language-oriented ECAs speed up students' learning pace and statistically students who participate in language-oriented extracurricular activities have significantly higher academic achievements.

Following hypotheses below will be tested in the thesis:

H1: Language-oriented extracurricular activities enhance learners' self-esteem, self-confidence and self-reliance.

H2: Joining in extracurricular activities motivates students to learn more.

H3: Students' practice in English in language-oriented extracurricular activities gives the learners abundant opportunities for natural language use. It allows students to speak and interact at ease.

Research Questions

Based on the researcher's knowledge and experience and the preliminary study of the topic, the following research questions have been shaped:

- Do language-oriented extracurricular activities have an effect on language learners' academic performance?
- Do language-oriented extracurricular activities have an effect on language learners' motivation to learn?
- Will the integration of language-oriented extracurricular activities into the formal curriculum lead to an improvement in students' formal assessment?

Research Methods

In order to assess the hypotheses, the applied research methods were:

- Review and analysis of existing literature on the topic;
- Survey;
- Interview;
- Experiment;
- Statistical analysis of quantitative data obtained through experiment data.

Quantitative paradigm:

To analyse quantitative data, SPSS 22.0 was used:

- ✓ pre-test (the results of tests conducted one week prior to the beginning of the academic year aiming at assessing students' initial knowledge)
- ✓ while-tests (tests conducted at the end of program stage I – week 8)
- ✓ post-test (tests conducted at the end of program stage – week 16)
- ✓ statistical analysis of the data obtained through the interviews and the experiments

Qualitative paradigm:

- ✓ Surveys and interviews with randomly selected students and lectures;
- ✓ Survey (prior to the research);
- ✓ Interviews (after the research).

Quantitative and Qualitative data were combined in a single study which enabled the researcher to explain the obtained results and interpret them.

Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation involves the following parts: introduction, 4 chapters, conclusion, and 6 appendices. There are 57 tables and 13 figures.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Introduction to Chapter 1

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) requires learners' exposure to what educators call the language skills: reading, speaking, writing and listening. Language teachers' aim is to make

students acquire language skills to ensure achievement both in oral and written communication. According to the researcher's observation, some students do not acquire enough language proficiency, especially in speaking and writing. The researcher indicates that, instead of giving much homework to be fulfilled, it is better to draw students' attention to English language-oriented extracurricular activities to obtain language competency. In this way, students will feel the language much more than in the classroom atmosphere and get their heads to learn English in a natural environment, having fun.

In this chapter, curriculum, ECA (extracurricular activity), EFL (English as a foreign language) and language-oriented ECAs will be presented.

1.1. Definition of Terms

1.1.1. Definition of Curriculum

There are hundreds of definitions of curriculum. For instance, Tyler defines it as a program for action or a written document which includes strategies to achieve longed goals or intentions (Tyler, 2013). Through a vast literature review many different activities provided by different scholars (Wheeler, 1997; Kerr, 1968); Eisner, 1975; Ratcliff, 1997; Bondi & Wiles, 1998; Tyler, 2004) have been studied and analyzed; based on the synthesis of these stances the dissertation will follow operational definition which defines curriculum as a programmed purposeful set of interactions to provide individual learning and development and to force meaning and knowledge clearly and implicitly.

1.1.2. Definition of Extracurricular Activities

Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt (2003) state that extracurricular activities are student experiences that are not included in the educational curriculum. These activities are a significant part of education. It has been proved that extracurricular activities are as necessary as regular classes for development of skills. Furthermore, Tenhouse (2003) adds that extracurricular activities are good opportunities for students to achieve their curricular goals. Students discover and develop their skills through these activities for achievement. Extracurricular activities are non-academic activities. They are as part of modules to develop students' mentality, sociality and moral values. Developing students' communicative competence and perception of life can be obtainable with learning process and experiences from activities they are enrolled in.

1.2. Development of Formal Curriculum

Curriculum idea is not so new, but its understanding and theorizing has changed over the decades and considerable disagreement continues. It comes originally from the Greece chariot tracks. Curriculum is a racing vehicle in Latin and the root of the word is ‘currere’ which means to run. Curriculum is defined by Kerr (1968) cited in Kelly’s work (2004, p. 7) as “any learning that is designed and followed by school, and implemented in groups or individually, inside or outside the school”.

1.3. Basic Principles of Extracurricular Activities

Educators’ aim is to motivate and help students gain both socially and academically, make accomplishments in life. Therefore, it is essential to take some principles into consideration. The principles below mostly have been developed by the researcher and most of them tested in the research.

1. Taking an action in ECA is more important than the expected results which will be probably gained in a very long term, because it gives an opportunity to the lecturer and student to be communicative. Students who are silent at lessons can be initiating and loquacious in extracurricular activities.
2. Extracurricular activities should be carefully planned and executed. Major principle to follow is the requirement that students are involved in only one extracurricular activity at a time and accordingly, setting should be strictly monitored and regulated by the teacher, though the activities themselves are voluntary and aim at involving students through their increased motivation. However, teacher monitoring should be covert and involvement is advised to be limited. Even so, a variety of extracurricular activities are to be offered to students as long as the aforementioned principle is observed – students are involved in one activity only at a time.

1.4. The Role of Extracurricular Activities in Student's Life

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) states that learners who take an action in any extracurricular activities have a fifteen percent more classroom attendance rate compared to non-participants (O'Brien & Rollefson, 1995). Human beings learn many things by doing or experiencing. Students who excel in extracurricular activities may get better adjusted for real situations. Students sometimes cannot find an opportunity to be open with teachers at schools.

And language teachers know that participation in lessons is the key factor for better learning. Thus, by joining ECAs, students act efficiently in real situations.

1.5. Research Questions

Based on the literature review, these research questions are formulated which specify the research questions formulated in the introduction (see p. 6):

- Do language-oriented extracurricular activities involvement help participants to get better learning outcomes?
- Do language-oriented extracurricular activities help participants to improve their language skills?
- Is it worth integrating language-oriented ECAs in school curriculum?
- Can language-oriented extracurricular activities improve students' academic performance?
- Do students learn better via language-oriented ECAs?

According to literature resources and researchers' definitions and explanations, it can be claimed that ECAs have a great impact on students' academic performance and if one is a language teacher in an institution, it is a good idea for him/her to draw students' attention to language-oriented extracurricular activities instead of giving them too much homework. By the analysis in this chapter, it can be said that ECA participation has a great role in language learning and students might be taken to academic achievement with ECAs. However, it is not easy to persuade each student to join ECAs after lessons. Therefore, teachers and ECA organizers have a great responsibility to concentrate students on English-oriented ECAs.

CHAPTER 2-ENGLISH as a FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) and THE SYSTEM of EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Introduction to the Chapter 2

There are thousands of ways to acquire a language. In order to learn a language there are many aspects that play roles. For example, students' intelligence, language learning aptitude, learning styles, personality, attitudes and motivation, learner beliefs, age, attitudes and motivation, motivation in classroom and also students' identity and ethnic group affiliation are the important factors. These factors deal with the learner, but also the instructor's way that he communicates

with the students is another issue to talk about. In face-to-face interviews in IUPS with students, before students sit for proficiency test, the examination committee asks students some personal questions to check how much the student is capable of responding and understanding questions. Based on these conversations, the researcher concluded that some students learned the language just by watching TV in their childhood. Some other students learn from songs by listening and memorizing and some of them study their dictionary by memorizing common words to use in daily life. Accordingly, the researcher observed a general trend – students learn much independently through the activities which are tightly connected to real-life contexts and thus are more meaningful to them; hence, it was decided that setting up the environment in which students are voluntarily involved and could easily make sense of a language use could foster their motivation to develop their language skills.

2.1. The role of English in Internationalization of Education

Internationalization is to a great extent becoming one of the most important issues in higher education. The English language has been rapidly spreading and increasing at universities all over the world. Due to the power of the English language in every part of the world, education can be internationalized. EFL is included in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and is a part of it. EFL is an acronym for English as a foreign language and is learnt by people who live in places where English language is not the first language, such as Georgia, Iraq, and Turkey, etc.

According to Harmer (2007), EFL means to teach English to learners where students learn English in their own country or are engaged in short courses which are carried in English spoken countries like Britain, Canada, etc. Every year TESOL meetings and gatherings are a common feature of the English teaching world in most of the countries. English is taught in countries where it is not the mother tongue nor does it have any special status, as in Japan, France, Turkey, Sweden, Georgia, Iraq and many other countries; thus, it is referred to as EFL (English as a Foreign Language). English is a worldwide language that has enormous power and effect; in different circumstances it is given all over the world. English language teaching in English-speaking countries is particularly developed in two wide directions; as first, for the people who are in the intention of living there and second, for people who want to improve English just having fun holiday. For permanent citizens, the way to teach English is established publicly and instructions are ready for long term and for the short term comers, private courses are organized and classes are held to some extent with intensive courses (Crystal, 1992).

2.2. Language-Oriented Extracurricular Activities

This sub-chapter defines EACs as part of language teaching and learning process and provides detailed analysis of benefits and possible drawbacks so that while planning and executing EACs teacher are able to make informed decisions concerning the activities, goals and objectives and possible learning outcomes.

2.2.1. The Effects of Extracurricular Activities on Students' Success in EFL

ECAs are a good remedy for the ones whose mind and heart are squeezed by the routine and stressful studies because of the loaded homework and responsibilities (Taylor & Chiogioji, 1988).

The benefits of ECAs could be elaborated as in the following:

1. ECAs encourage students while singing, playing, acting, recitation, speaking and narrating any school subjects at school and social life.
2. Participation in sports, games, debates, music, drama, etc., being motivational elements, helps students to reach over all functioning of education.
3. Debate ECA is a good chance for students to express themselves freely.
4. Sports help students to be fit and energetic. While students are fit and energetic, they are mentally fit in mind as well.
5. Students learn to be patient and they develop the atmosphere of healthy competition.
6. These activities help and guide students to organize and present an activity remarkably, develop speaking and writing skills, they learn how to cooperate and coordinate in different situations-all these are related with leadership qualities.
7. Students will learn that life is not only studying school subjects and having grades in exams.
8. ECAs supply possibilities and opportunities for students to show themselves to act according to the situations and they will socialize, self-identify and self-assess during any social, cultural or academic activities by getting in touch with organizers, teachers and people out of the school.
9. Students will be able to understand others' feelings and values from their perception.
10. Students will be good decision makers.
11. Students will feel that they belong to a network or group of people.
12. ECAs provide motivation for learning. This makes students motivated.
13. ECAs cause students to feel psychological, ethical, social, aesthetic, physical, cultural, academic and disciplinary values to great extent.

Extracurricular activities will raise aspirations of students and create a positive bond between students and school. When students are positively connected to their schools, they will have confidence for a better perception of knowledge that will lead to efficiency in learning. Extracurricular activities will help students build good relationships among peers; therefore, when students participate in these activities, their classroom engagement increases. Extracurricular activities will provide students practice environments, and these practice opportunities will enable students to gain confidence (Eccles, 2004). Students will stand a better chance of displaying their skills and abilities in a confident classroom practice.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH CONTEXT METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction to Chapter 3

In this chapter, Ishik University and its Preparatory Schools as important institutions, the teaching and learning mode at Ishik University Preparatory School are described as this is the background on which the research in the dissertation was conducted. Also, research methodology and data dealing with research participants are introduced.

3.1. Research Context-Introducing Ishik University in Kurdistan

3.1.1. University Profile

Ishik University is a young international university that has been ensuring reliable education mostly for Iraqi students for about eight years. Nechirvan Barzani, the prime Minister of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq, parliamentarians of KRG, officials, General Consul of Turkey in Mosul, and members of parliament of Turkey were welcomed to the opening ceremony in 2008 in Erbil to give a start to the university education.

The university is in the intention of ensuring knowledge to everybody, despite of their belief, ethnicity, political ideas or social status. Ishik University is a privately run foundation university that was built and owned by Fezalar Educational Company. Giving high standard education to the new generation who will be enlightened for the world with utilizing updated technology is its aim. The majority of the academic staff of Ishik University is international and some of them are multinational academics.

IU is one of the leading educational institutions of Kurdistan in Iraq. It intends to supply theoretical and practical education, as well as research and development. To do this, it communicates and cooperates with the regional and local universities.

The university provides learners deep and comprehensive education at a level with international standards. It contributes to the development of local and universal values. Ishik University has attempted a great role of being an educational milestone between the student and the world. Courses at Ishik University are taught in English. Therefore, it is important that students know it at a high, corresponding to the university goals, level. Students are well informed that learning English well will enable them to understand their subject matter courses adequately. Ishik University has six faculties with ten departments. In 2014 December, its new branch was founded with three faculties in Sulaimani.

3.1.2. Learners' Background

Most of the learners, before coming to study at Ishik University, went to public schools and they had English lessons - two classes a week - from the fifth grade to the twelfth grade. Some students studied in private schools, following the same curriculum, and some went to private language courses parallel to school, not to lose one year in Preparatory School program. However, there were just a few students in the beginning of the year who were able to answer questions without making grave grammatical mistakes. Before university, the students studied some basic grammatical structures of English, and they studied the past, present and future tenses. Yet, students had not had any writing or speaking activities, all the rules they studied at school were forgotten. Learners step by step started learning English from starter and they had to do workbook exercises without delay and the course-book reading passages and easy starter books were given to fully read as homework. After that, students started an elementary course-book from the third week. Students started learning new structures, they got the basic grammar in four weeks intensively and they were given many worksheets to study at home. In Sulaimani, those worksheets were given after lessons in the afternoon and were done in group study and answers were given to students after completion by the lecturer. It was obvious that students had limited vocabulary knowledge, especially on everyday language. Learners of this level need reading extensively to learn new vocabulary and they need to write much, in order to do it accurately without punctuation or spelling mistakes. Unfortunately, the number of students in the classroom, the personality of students, their educational backgrounds and teacher-students

relations do not allow the lecturers to organize language-oriented extracurricular activities regularly.

3.2. Ishik University Preparatory School

3.2.1. English Preparatory School Students

Ishik University English Language Preparatory School is to supply the students with a linguistic background in English. In this way, they can deal with their departmental studies which are conducted in English, with its trained academic staff, technical equipment and interactive teaching materials and systems.

Learners are accepted to university after they succeed in the state exam which is set by the Ministry of Higher Education in Iraq. Education at Ishik University for all courses in the departments except law department is in English. After the admission to the university, learners are asked to have a proficiency exam in English which is carried out by IUPS. If the students pass it with a good grade, they start the departmental study at once. If not, before the courses start, students take an on-line Oxford Press level test. This exam shows the language level of learners. Depending on their scores, learners are directed to different course levels according to the placement test gathered. The main goal of starter level is to teach learners simple words and structures. The higher the level, the more complicated the course is. They continue studies at Prep School until their level is relevant for studies at the faculties.

IUPS aims to advance students' vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills through in-class activities or self-study, to improve the English proficiency and skills of freshman who were newly accepted to undergraduate and graduate programs to the extent at which learners are supposed to understand what they read and hear, to be able to take notes of lectures and to be able to express themselves verbally and orally.

3.3. Research Methods

To assess the hypotheses discussed in the introduction, an experimental study was implemented with the experimental group where little homework was given to the students who were actively involved in language-oriented extracurricular activities and with the control group which was not involved in any extracurricular activities, but had to fulfil numerous home assignments. Otherwise, the two groups were maximally identical to each other (same syllabus, same educational materials, same time dedicated to language leaning, same level of language skills).

To answer whether extracurricular activities integrated with the curriculum cause language learners to improve learners' language skills and students who participate in language-oriented extracurricular activities get statistically higher level of language skills or not, quantitative and qualitative methods of research were used. Overall, one pre-, one while-and one post-test were implemented in the control and experimental group to measure the changes in students' skills.

3.3.1. Quantitative Methods

The researcher collected statistical data on the learning outcomes from the experimental and control groups and conducted statistical analysis of the data using SPSS 22.0 program. The quantitative data were also obtained through descriptive statistics for students' and lecturers' statements of the survey statements.

3.3.2. Qualitative Methods

The qualitative data was used for the analysis of students' and lecturers' responses to interview questions. Students' and lecturers' responses to the open-ended questions of the interview were analyzed in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introducing the Research

A quazi-experiment was conducted, as there was no possibility to assign students to the control and experimental groups at random. There were just two groups of the same level (A1) at IUPS, one group at Erbil (hence the control group, 19 students) and one group at Sulaimani prep school (hence experimental group, 15 students). They all volunteered to participate in the experiment which lasted for sixteen weeks. The students' level of language skills in both groups was measured through pre- while and post-tests of the same format, volume and difficulty level.

The survey questions for both students and lecturers were prepared online, using Google drive forms; the participants had to assess the suggested item according to a 5-point Likert scale (1 point – disagree, 5 points – strongly agree). The 14 question-statements intended to investigate students' and lecturers' satisfaction with the course, their attitude to the content of the course and their attitude to a teaching mode and their learning opportunities.

Lecturers and students were interviewed after the experiment was completed. They were selected randomly. Each interview lasted approximately fifteen minutes, they were recorded and transcribed. Semi-structured interviews consisted of pre-determined questions to ensure standardization of the obtained data and it also allowed the discussion of the issues which emerged through conversations with each individual based on their knowledge, experience, attitudes and beliefs. The interviews with teachers intended to define teachers' attitude to extracurricular activities, their knowledge of this mode of teaching and their competence and eagerness to use these approach in teaching; the interviews with students obtained information about personal attitudes to language learning and intended to identify students' preferable teaching and learning styles.

The following table provides the summary of the research design:

Table 1: Summary of the research desing:

					Total
Number of students in case study (accepted as A1 level)	Control Group	19	Experimental group	15	34
Number of students that answered survey questions	Control Group	19	Experimental group	15	34
Number of students that were interviewed	Control Group	0	Experimental group	6	6
Number of lecturers that answered survey questions	From other institutions	3	Ishik University	14	17
Interview with lecturers	From other institutions	2	Ishik University	4	6

4.1. Data Analysis from the Experiment

The students' skill levels, the difference between the groups' levels, the difference between each group's results compared to the previous stage were analyzed with the help of SPSS 22.0 program. Mean results, standard deviation and standard error mean were calculated. The survey results were also calculated, while the interviews were transcribed and content carefully analyzed. The transcript of the interviews and survey results were studied carefully.

4.1.1. Interpretation of Students' Pre-Test, While-Test and Post-Test Grade Point Averages in IUPSs

Table 2: Control (Erbil) and experiment group statistics according to pre-test results

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest Results	Control group	19	36.8421	11.01142	2.52619
	Experimental group	15	36.2667	8.52280	2.20058

The results shown in Table 2 demonstrate that the average of proficiency test result for the control is 36.8421 points out of 100, versus 36.2667 points for the experimental group. According to two groups' independent samples T-test result there is little difference between two groups, based on Table 2.

Table 3: T-test results of control and experimental groups in pre-test for equality of means

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pretest Results	Equal variance assumed	.105	.747	.167	32	.869	.57544	3.45367	-6.45945	7.60333
	Equal variance not assumed			.172	31.995	.865	.57544	3.35025	-6.24884	7.39972

It can be said that there is no statistically significant difference and both groups have approximately the same level of language skills. The mean difference between the two groups is 0.58. This result shows that this difference is little. The standard deviation is a bit higher in experimental group (11.01) than in control group (8.52), but there is no big difference between

them. It is known that when standard deviation increases within a group, the variety of obtained marks also increase and in vice versa case standard deviation decreases. It is important to see how the standard deviation will change in the while and post-tests. The significance of 0.869 is greater than $P \leq 0.05$, which means that the difference between the two groups is statistically insignificant. The reason behind this is the fact that students' arrangement was based on their proficiency exam results. In order to get reliable data of experiment, it was essential to organize two groups with maximally the same levels of language skills, to make them comparable.

Figure 1 shows the mean results in both groups obtained from pre, while and post-tests. The students of the experimental group (36.84) performed better than the students of the control group (36.27). This supports the hypothesis of the research, as the group where extra-curricular language-based activities were applied did better than the group where these activities were not used.

Figure 1: Control and Experiment groups' 16 week general performance result

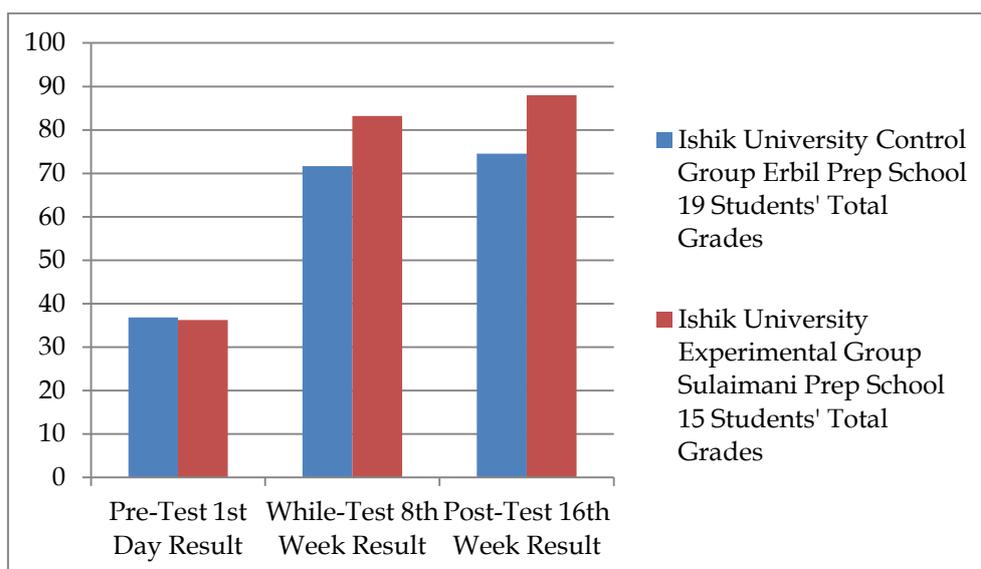


Table 4 summarized the post-test results.

Table 4: Statistics based on the post-test of control and experimental groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post Test	Control	19	74.5263	6.20366	1.42322
	Experimental	15	86.7333	9.96757	2.57361

As shown in Table 4, the average of post test result for the control group is 74.52 points out of 100, versus 86.73 points out of 100 for the experimental. It shows that, although both groups achieved certain progress, it has slowed down (due to reaching high enough points), the growth of skills level compared to while-test in the control group was 2.85 points, while the growth of skills level of the experimental group was 3.40 points, which is larger. Experimental group students demonstrate much more success than control group students. It shows that while students in control group maintain their English note worthily from 71.68 to 74.52 points over 100, experimental group students increase their total average from 83.33 to 86.73 points over 100.

4.2. Data from the Students' and Teachers' Survey

4.2.1. Interpretation of Students' Survey-Based on Extracurricular Activities

Fourteen survey statements were asked to 34 prep students of which 17 are male and 17 are female. The following 2 statements are presented as a sample to give understanding what issues were covered through the statements and what students' general attitude in both control and experimental groups were.

Table 5-Q1: *Ishik Prep School has an extremely intensive curriculum*

Item 1: Prep school at IU has an especially intensive curriculum					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	12	35.3	35.3	35.3
	Agree	10	29.4	29.4	64.7
	Neutral	6	17.6	17.6	82.4
	Disagree	6	17.6	17.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

In table 5, 64.7 cumulative percent of respondents agree that prep school has an extremely intensive curriculum. Intensive nature of the program creates a heavy burden for students; however, introducing extracurricular activities supports the perception that teaching and learning can be fun; this attitude helps students to gain motivation and be more concentrated on learning in spite of the volume of work they have to do.

Table 6- Q1: *Ishik Prep School English Course Curriculum is designed according to students' needs*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	Strongly Agree	4	23.5	23.5	23.5
	Agree	10	58.8	58.8	82.4
	Neutral	1	5.9	5.9	88.2
	Disagree	2	11.8	11.8	100.0
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	

Based on table 6, 82.4 percent of respondents think that Ishik prep school course curriculum is designed according to students' needs. This is perceived as a positive aspect of program by the program administration; however, teachers' and administration's perception only does not count; it is essential that students showed the same attitude and thought that curriculum is designed to meet students' needs and interest. This is crucial in current student-centered methodology as student-centered mode of teaching and learning allowed motivating students, involving them in meaningful learning which ultimately led to improved learning outcomes and academic achievements.

4.3. Data from the Interviews and Observation

It is not normally acceptable to teach a learner English in 24 weeks. Personally, we think that students should have 50 weeks English course if we want them to be in advanced level. But in Kurdistan there is no prep school program at university level except bridge schools in which students who failed in national state exam in one or two subjects take preparation courses. State universities in which subjects are given in English last four years and students are expected to learn English in intermediate level. It is not acceptable and unhealthy either. Students are not able to learn proficiently. But in Ishik University Sulaimani Prep School students' achievement is remarkable and important for the researcher as this achievement is because of the students' interest in English extracurricular activities and lecturers' constant concern about students' success.

For an English class, the number of students is also important in terms of controlling students in activities or conducting any pair work or group works. The researcher was lucky in a sense that there were only 15 students in the classroom. The experiment would have been more difficult to conduct if there had been 20 or more students in the classroom. While the experiment was in progress it was observed that students' shyness as an obstacle in speaking skill changed and students writing manner changed positively and fast. They were not shy to speak to express anything comes to their mind and were able to write well-organized sentences and paragraphs in

a short time. Students had good friendship and they organized some social activities out of the school and invited the lecturer. It caused a warm interaction between students and teachers.

4.4. Research Findings

The findings of this study proved that language-based extracurricular activities should be integrated with the curriculum to improve learners' language skills, to enrich learners' self-esteem, self-confidence and self-reliance, to speed up students' learning pace, to ensure a major contribution to language proficiency and to increase students' overall achievement in language learning. However, to provide those realities ECA organizers need a plan for what, whom, when and how long to use activities. These activities are beneficial for EFL or ESL teachers who complain about insufficient time for learning in school programs. Students learn if they are interested and interest can be provided with exciting extracurricular activities. In the research 10 types of language-based extracurricular activities were applied, but their number can be increased.

As Marsh (2002, p. 553) says, „extracurricular activities will lead to higher educational success and they will help students to get better grades in the examinations“. Gerber (1996) adds that students through these activities get higher scores in tests. I totally agree with them because the research has shown that the experimental group scored better marks than the control group students and demonstrated a significant growth compared to the initial results in the post-test.

CONCLUSION

After all interpretations of the data, analysis of literature and experimental research results which are based on the qualitative and quantitative methods to test language-oriented extracurricular activities' role in the academic achievement of English as EFL learners in Iraqi context, the conclusions and recommendations of the dissertation are as follows:

- ✓ Implementing language-oriented extracurricular activities are vital in learning/teaching a foreign language. IU candidates start education in the late of December and finish in the first week of June with final exam. Time is limited and workload of teachers and students is a lot on large scale. Language-oriented extracurricular activities support students and teachers in their endeavours.
- ✓ Modern demands require that new methods or techniques should be followed to make students learn English in a short time, especially, in Iraq, where education is based on only formal curriculum and mainly memorization, and where it is common to meet surprising

students who are capable of learning a language by watching television or playing computer games, and where there are lots of holidays something like raining and limited time for students to study.

- ✓ Language-oriented extracurricular activities play a key role in teaching and learning English. On the other hand, teaching English as a supplementary method with language-oriented extracurricular activities needs a well-organized curriculum and it must be planned before the academic year starts and activities and course syllabuses must be well synchronized.
- ✓ In prep school curriculum, the traditional methods of language teaching are efficient to some extent, but they are rather teacher-centered, which is obviously not very good. Students acquire the foreign language in formal ways and usually it may demotivate learners. Therefore, several language-oriented extracurricular activities are aspiration for students, as this is the way that leads students to communicate with their peers and lecturers easily, feeling self-esteem and self-confidence.
- ✓ It was hypothesized that the implementation of language-oriented extracurricular activities in the curriculum would help students achieve better learning outcomes than the traditional way by following the school curriculum. The quantitative (experiment) results supported the hypothesis that the application of language-oriented extracurricular activities increases students' language skills level, especially in speaking and writing fields more effectively than the traditional way of teaching. The control group students' score increased from 36.8 in pretest to 71.68 in while-test, and 74.52 in post-test. On the other hand, the experimental group students' score increased from 36.2 in pretest to 83.33 in while-test, and 81.73 in post-test. Accordingly Language-oriented extracurricular activities approach is efficient and effective to have better academic performance.
- ✓ The second and third hypothesis were that language-oriented extracurricular activities enhance learners' self-esteem, self-confidence and self-reliance, joining in extracurricular activities motivates students to learn more, students learn English language better participating in language extracurricular activities and students' practice in English in extracurricular activities gives a lot of opportunities for natural language use. Actually, the qualitative (interview) results revealed that both parties (teachers and students) expressed readiness to use language-oriented extracurricular activities. In the post-experimental interview, six experimental group respondents demonstrated their ease and satisfaction with the language-oriented extracurricular activities application and their motivation. They responded that language-oriented extracurricular activities:

- drop students into a reading habit
- make learners motivated
- stimulate learners to use their potential by practicing on their own
- provide a stress-free atmosphere as learning to learn with peers
- provide original test samples via internet to check their language level

From this study, the researcher recommends the curriculum developers, prep school directors and level coordinators to think about the role of language-oriented extracurricular activities twice and design a schedule that is filled with interesting and attractive activities. The researcher's philosophy about learning a language is that a language is acquired personally but good leading and motivational techniques make learning fast and enjoyable for learners.

For future study, it is better to expand the scope of the research in order to gain more reliable and valid result. Increasing the number of students, lecturers and number of schools and analyzing the groups can bring an accurate outcome to collect the objectives of this study and last but not least, it may be a good idea if students take initiatives in organizing activities.

Major research findings of the dissertation are presented in the following publications:

Tosun, M. & Yildiz, Y. (2015). Extracurricular activities as warm-ups in language teaching. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 2 (1), 62-64.

Yildiz, Y. (2015). Better education at Ishik University Preparatory School with extracurricular activities. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 6 (4), 158-161.

Yildiz, Y. (2015). The key to success in English learning can be involvement in extra curricular. *International Journal of Thesis Projects and Dissertations*, 3 (3), 24-28.

Yildiz, Y. (2015). Time Spent in Target Language-Oriented Extracurricular Activities and Foreign Language Students' Satisfaction. *ICELT 5th International Research Conference* (p. 478-482). Tbilisi: International Black Sea University.

Yildiz, Y. (2016). The Impact of Language-Oriented Extracurricular Activities on Academic Achievement in Language Preparation Schools. *Journal of Education in Black Sea Region*, 1(2), 161-171.