ABSTRACT

Constructive alignment in a curriculum has been mentioned by many previous experts all over the world. This study partly contributed in this area. This research was conducted to investigate the teachers and students’ perceptions of the alignment in a General English curriculum in the context of a university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Participants of this study were sixteen teachers and one hundred and sixty-seven students in a university in the south of Vietnam. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from questionnaires and semi-structure interviews. The results of this study was that both teachers and students agreed that there is an alignment between the learning outcomes and teaching and assessment activities in the General English curriculum. Implications for teachers and curriculum developers was figured out basing on the results of the study.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The introductory chapter includes five main sections. The first section is the rationale of students’ proficiency in speaking English in Vietnam and in Mekong Delta, leading to the reasons for conducting this study. The second section is research aims. Thirdly, research questions are introduced in this chapter. The fourth section is the significance of the study. The last section is the organization of the study.

1.1 RATIONALE

English is an international language. In Vietnam, English is the most popular foreign language. Because of this, English is a compulsory language in all of public and private schools in Vietnam. The students start studying English when they are in the primary school (Grade 3). Students study English from Grade 3 to the university. In language centers, English is also taught for early childhood programs. Though widely taught, students’ English proficiency is still low. The reality has shown that when the students take programs in the university, the majority of them cannot communicate in English. In such a context, on 30 September 2008, the Prime Minister issued Decision No.1400/ QĐ-TTg and the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project was born which aims to promote the quality of foreign language learning and teaching. The framework of foreign language proficiency was also issued, consisting of six levels from Level 1 to Level 6 (equivalent A1 to C2- Common European Framework Reference (CEFR)). College and university students should be able to achieve Level 3 (equivalent B1- CEFR) before graduating from the university. Such policy gives chances for colleges and universities to invest time and effort in improving the quality of their General
English programs so as to help non-English majors achieve level 3 of their English proficiency.

It is certain an operative curriculum will bring about positive impact on students’ learning and learning outcomes, and it becomes clear that no curriculum is effective without evaluation and adjustment. Therefore, curriculum evaluation is an activity which should be conducted regularly in every schools and universities. Evaluation in the scope of this study is to examine how learning outcomes align with teaching and assessment activities. It is worth investigating teachers’ perceptions of the alignment between the learning outcomes and teaching and assessment activities implemented in the General English curriculum at the university under investigation.

1.2 RESEARCH AIMS

This study aims to achieve two objectives. The first one was to find out the teachers’ perceptions of the alignment between the learning outcomes and teaching and assessment activities in the General English curriculum at the target university. The second aim was to find out the teachers’ perceptions of the alignment between the learning outcomes and teaching and assessment activities in the General English curriculum at the target university.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the alignment between the learning outcomes and teaching and assessment activities in the General English curriculum at a university under investigation?

2. What are the students’ perceptions of the alignment between the learning outcomes and teaching and assessment activities in the General English curriculum at a university under investigation?
1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There has not been any study investigating the alignment of the learning outcomes and teaching and assessment activities in the General English curriculum which has been published in Vietnam and in the Mekong Delta. As a result, findings from the study would enrich the literature in the field and shed light into how to enhance the quality of the curriculum to meet learners’ learning needs.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Research Methodology, Results, Discussion and Conclusion.

Chapter One presents rationale of the study, research aims, research questions, significance of the study and organization of the thesis.

Chapter Two reviews literature related to the perceptions of teachers and students on the General English curriculum. Firstly, the definition of the perception was synthesized and reported. Secondly, the theories of curriculum and curriculum evaluation were found. Thirdly, constructive alignment was defined. Finally, a number of related studies were summarized by the researcher.

Chapter Three describes the research methodology of the study including research aims, research questions and hypothesis, participants and research instruments as questionnaires and interview questions used for data collection, the procedure of collecting data and the data analysis.

Chapter Four reports the results from the data collected through the use of questionnaires and interviews.

Chapter Five presents the summary of the major research results, the discussion of the issues evolving from the results and the implications for the
curriculum. Moreover, the limitations of the study as well as suggestion for further research are recommended at the end of the chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The chapter reviews the literature related to EFL teachers and students’ perceptions of the General English curriculum. This chapter consists of four parts: (1) definitions of perception (2) definitions of curriculum and curriculum evaluation (3) definitions of constructive alignment and (4) related studies on those topics.

2.1 PERCEPTION

Definitions of perception are abounding in literature. Bryant (1973) confirmed that there is a close relationship between people’s perception and people’s understanding of their environment. It means that perception could be understood as understanding of one’s surrounding. Rao and Narayan’s (1998) stated, “Perception is the process whereby people select, organize, and interpret sensory stimulations into meaningful information about their work environment (p. 329-330)”.

In this study, perception is understood as human ability to receive, adjust and evaluate what they experienced. Teachers and students who have experienced the General English curriculum because of working directly with this can evaluate the alignment between the learning outcomes and teaching and assessment activities in the curriculum exactly and reliably. Teachers and students reflect precisely what are unsuitable such as the mismatch of contents and assessments; contents and students’ needs; assessments and learning outcomes.
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