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A Case Study of a University Preparatory English Program for Incoming Freshmen

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This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a university preparatory English program (UPEP) for incoming freshmen in order to improve similar programs and research in this area. UPEP was conducted at E. University in South Korea for two weeks in January 2016, prior to the students' first semester of university. Participants included students from 50 different high schools, and five native English instructors. Questionnaires were given to instructors and students following the completion of the program to measure participant and instructor perceptions of the program. Results showed that instructors did not believe skill levels improved significantly during the two week program. However, students' confidence in speaking English with a native speaker, and meeting students from different majors were listed as important factors in recommending this program to other students. Further, instructor quality was the highest rated factor in students' rating of the program. Finally, there is a significant difference in student perceptions of the pre-tests ability to measure skill, and instructor perceptions of the same test.

[university preparatory English program/English camp/immersion program]

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, in Korea, the number of students entering universities has been decreasing. As a result, the Ministry of Education has created various educational policies. One such policy reduces the total number of incoming students allotted to each

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university. This number is reached by evaluating the quality of the university's education. This is driving universities in Korea to search for new ways to raise the overall quality of teaching and learning as well as actively recruit high school students. With a focus on overall improvement and recruitment, preparatory courses can be seen as a viable way to increase a university's attractiveness and performance levels.

There are differing ways that universities in Korea have operated their preparatory programs. However, the common feature of these programs is the desire to create a foundation of basic academic abilities in order to reduce the knowledge gap between high school and university level courses. For this, some Korean universities provide basic academic courses such as math, science, computer technology, English, university adjustment programs, etc.

Thanks to globalization, many countries view English communication skills as a necessity. As a result, the need for English proficiency in Korea has created opportunities for informal means of English teaching, alongside the standard English courses provided. Language learners need to know how to empower themselves by taking opportunities in various social and cultural situations, inside and outside the classroom (E. Lee, 2008). In response to this ideal, there is a demand for English to be the language of instruction for other courses. Via the 'teaching English through English" policy, English use has often been required in various major courses, aside from general English classes.

While these measures are designed to improve English ability, a lack of real-world experience communicating in English has been one of the biggest obstacles for Korean learners of English. This need for real-world application has opened the doors for native speakers of English, throughout Korea, to serve as models of spoken English in a variety of contexts. Such models are found in English language immersion program, which have emerged in Korea as an innovative approach to learning and teaching English in association with programs such as 'English Camp,' 'English Village, or English Zone (Park, 2006; Seong, Reed, & Chang, 2012).

A large body of research has shown the effects of English Camps, on general language acquisition, to be positive. However, at the time of this study, little research has been conducted on the efficacy of immersive English programs specifically tailored to incoming university students. As such, this study analyzes a preparatory immersive English program for incoming university students. This study was designed to improve programs such as these, while also informing future research info immersive English programs for incoming university students.

II. BACKBROUND

1. University Preparatory Programs

Simply put, a university preparatory school or college preparatory school in the US is primarily designed to prepare students for college or university. These programs have shown to be effective in their goals. For example, according to Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), the University of California Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) is a pre-collegiate student academic development program. EAOP provides four key areas of service to underserved schools: academic enrichment, entrance exams preparation, academic advising, and college knowledge. The program has proven to increase academic achievement and college completion for its students. The University of Colorado's Pre-Collegiate Program is an academic enhancement program designed to motivate middle and high school students to pursue higher education. Georgetown University has a three-week College prep program. Students learn test-taking techniques, work closely with instructors, and engage through workshops and college tours. Students in The College Prep Program are exposed to five subject areas: English, math, study skills, SAT test preparation, and intellectual discovery.

In summary, the characteristics of university preparatory programs in the US include: experience in college life, preparation for tests, improvement of needed skills, exposure to a diverse student population, and visits to colleges and universities in the university area. A college preparatory course is a means by which college bound high school students may better meet the more stringent scholastic requirements of colleges and universities.

Conversely, until recently in Korea, there have been two types of preparatory programs. One is called UP, which refers to a University-level Program for exceptional high school students. UP is designed to prepare students for college through “college prep classes.” The other is called University Preparatory School, particularly for those high school students who are already allowed to enter University. These programs focus on increasing academic readiness.

In Korea, the government-run University Level Program (UP) offers math, science, Korean composition, English composition, etc. for universities who wish to have the program. College Preparatory Education, however, are courses designed for students who need to strengthen their academic skills before enrolling in college-level courses. They help students reach their educational and career goals. College preparatory courses do not count toward a degree or diploma, but the credits do count toward full-time status for students.

Finally, University Preparatory School Programs have recently been created for

students who have been accepted, and are entering university in the upcoming semester. For example, Ajou University provided incoming students with math, physics and computer science prep courses. Hannam University and Kongju University, in preparation for incoming students, provided adjustment programs, such as, college life guidance and study strategies. Hanlim University provided basic math and intensive English conversation, along with physical education courses. Sukmyoung Women's University and Chungbuk University provided lectures from guest speakers. Sungkunkwan University provided courses in basic physics, computer data, English writing, etc. Of the courses provided for English education, incoming students were able to participate in intensive English conversation courses (Hanlim) and English writing courses (Sungkunwan).

2. English Immersion Programs

Authentic and abundant language input and output opportunities are crucial elements to second language acquisition. According to several researchers, the most valuable factor in facilitating communication is the frequency of English used (Clement, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; Leger & Storch, 2009; Li, 2005; Macintyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002). Increasing the frequency of English heard, and spoken, can be done in many ways, with studying abroad being preferable to many people. However, in Korea, shorter immersive language camps are more cost effective.

Research shows that English immersion programs are successful, not only in language acquisition, but also in cultural understanding for the program participants. Language learners need to learn how to empower themselves by taking opportunities in various social and cultural situations inside and outside the classroom (E. Lee, 2008; Park, 2006). According to Garcia and Torres-Ayala (1991), the purpose of immersion programs is to provide input from native language models in naturalistic, non-monitored, situations. English immersion programs emerged in Korea as an innovative approach to learning and teaching. Previous studies on English Camps in Korea have mainly focused on reporting the making and the application of the individual camp programs and their effects (Cho, 1999; Seong, Reed, & Chang, 2012; Yoo, 1999). These studies report positive results for Camp programs and provide theoretical support for the continuation of English Camps in Korea. Rha (2009) investigated EFL college students' expectations and affective involvement in a domestically-run English camp, which was a three-week camp that housed and boarded students. J. E Lee (2011) examined the effectiveness of a domestic four-week English camp program for college students. The results showed that students in the English camps were strongly satisfied with the program, and their average scores, after completing the intensive English program, were 89 points higher than their

peers who did not participate in the preparatory program. Those studies were conducted using the quantitative research method.

As English immersion has become perceived as a powerful tool for successful English language learning, many schools and universities have set up areas of campus wherein English is the primary language. This includes not only English speaking, but also access to English language media and access to native speakers. These areas are often referred to as “English Zone[s].” Many universities are currently providing short-term English camps in the summer and winter holidays. These programs are one of the most popular formats of immersion education used to provide natural communication in English, strengthen students' English proficiency, and also, to increase self-confidence in using English.

While immersion programs have become a generally accepted practice in Korea, research on the effects of immersion programs do vary. Rifkin (2005), looking at grammatical accuracy, found a significant correlation between the hours of classroom instruction in immersion and non-immersion settings. The data showed that, compared to a traditional classroom, immersion-based instruction was more efficient for developing the four skills, as well as, grammar/syntax acquisition. Dartmouth College and Manchester Community College, in the USA, also reported positive results (Liskin-Gasparro, 1998). Manchester students learned one-third more material during the intensive immersion program than students in traditional classes. However, Swain and Lapkin (1989) found that, while listening and reading comprehension were more developed in immersion programs than in a regular classroom, immersion students were equally as competent in the areas of spelling and writing as their peers. Further, Hammerly (1987) reviewed six studies of immersion programs which extended instruction for more than one year. All programs reported results less satisfactory than had been expected.

Given the various forms that immersion programs can take, immersion programs have inherent strengths and weaknesses. Since immersion programs are commonplace and relied upon, across Korea, for students at all levels of skill and education, it is imperative to understand all aspects of immersion programs in order to tailor them to university and student needs.

With this need to understand the variables related to English immersion programs, the University Preparatory English Program (UPEP) used for this study, was designed with a few significant differences compared to typical immersion programs. Specific differences include: UPEP was created for a specific demographic, content and material creation and usage, activities, and interaction with native speakers.

3. Overview of UPEP

1) Program Development

UPEP was designed specifically for students who were scheduled to enter E. University in Korea in the upcoming semester. UPEP was designed as a language immersion program. The key differences between UPEP and standard immersion programs are what make it unique and worth evaluating. UPEP first began as an idea to create a program specifically for incoming freshman with a focus on, not only improving the students' language skills, but also to prepare them for the upcoming semester in a meaningful way.

UPEP at E. University was conducted by the staff of the Department of Liberal Arts. The director of the department was responsible for establishing the goals of the program. The goals of UPEP were to expose students to the rigors of a college schedule and production requirements, while at the same time improving their abilities in, and comfort level with, communications in English. UPEP was only a two week program. As a result, the goals for language acquisition were less about quantifiable knowledge, and more about comfort with English communications skills, primarily speaking, listening, and confidence, both in the classroom, and when communicating with a native speaker.

Following that, the director established the desired number of participants according to budget restrictions as well as the schedule for participant recruitment, program dates, and payment for instructors. Recruitment of students was done via a recruitment advertisement posted on the university website in December of 2015 between the time students were notified of their admittance to E University and the due date for the first tuition payment.

After establishing a sufficient amount of students, the director appointed a coordinator for UPEP. Afterwards, a planning committee was created to plan the remaining aspects of UPEP. The committee consisted of the director, coordinator, and two university professors. Instructors were selected, on a volunteer basis, from professors with an available schedule at the time of UPEP. The availability of professors was one limitation of this program as the participating professors were asked to teach a significant number of hours. The benefit of this was a larger timeframe within which instructors were able to establish stronger relationships with students which potentially lead to increased comfort when communicating in English.

UPEP was divided into three skills levels: Beginner, Intermediate, High-Intermediate. Class sizes were limited to, no more than, 18 students with the smallest class containing 15. Students were placed into their appropriate levels based on the results of a preliminary phone-speaking test. In anticipation of these levels, the coordinator

scheduled particular instructors to teach certain levels based on instructor preference and experience with students of similar levels.

Unique to the UPEP process was the development of the curriculum and schedule. The UPEP curriculum utilized a series of textbooks focused on teaching the 4-skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, based on the appropriate level of each classroom. Further, with guidance from the coordinator, the instructors also developed a booklet filled with materials that matched the instructors' areas of academic interests and areas of experience, such as screen English, creative writing, literature analysis, etc. All instructors were able to use materials that they, themselves, created during their UPEP class time. Further, instructors were given the freedom to teach within the context of their own classrooms regardless of which book was being used. This freedom allowed for organic lessons that, while having general themes and goals, could be tailored to the atmosphere and interests of the class. Essentially, this variety created a truly immersive language program more reflective of varying, real-world, experiences.

UPEP's varied scheduling system exposed students to a variety of instructors and instructor created materials, while also providing them with a wide variety of subjects ranging from standard 4-skills material, to conversation, presentation, public speaking, survival English, creative writing, and literature analysis.

2) UPEP Class Operation

UPEP was composed of two classes per day, with a run-time of three hours per class, beginning at 10 a.m. and finishing at 4 p.m. Morning classes utilized a textbook approach focusing on the 4- skills. Afternoon classes were used the instructor booklet. This included grammar lessons as well. The class time activities and bookwork were based on materials inside the textbook with each instructor being free to choose their preferred style of teaching the materials.

General presentation and speech classes were conducted early on in UPEP to give all students a base set of skills that would later be useful for the final video project, as well as, preparing the students for similar types of work during their collegiate career. Creative writing was designed to increase the comfort level of students with writing in English in a way that was not purely academic, and also, to spark their creativity for use in their final project.

Conversation classes were specifically designed for the instructors to have the freedom to use the instructor booklet in a way that they deemed appropriate for the class skill level. One instructor focused on survival and situational English surrounding different locations that one might travel. Another instructor focused on conversational English in a social setting, such as dating or introductions. One instructor focused on

Screen English and utilizing videos from movies and TV shows in order to analyze different types of speech, idioms, jokes, and general storytelling. Another professor focused on creativity, literary analysis and problem solving. The final professor focused on dramatic English and acting.

TABLE 1

UPEP 2016 Schedule

	Jan 18	Jan 19	Jan 20	Jan 21	Jan 22
10:00 - 10:50	Opening Ceremony	Grammar	Listening	Speech Presentation	Creative Writing
11:00 - 11:50	Speaking	Speaking / Writing	Presentation Skills	Grammar	Public Speaking
12:00 - 12:50	Reading / Writing	Reading / Discussion	Speech Writing	Reading / Discussion	Activities
14:00 - 14:50	Conversation	Conversation	Conversation	Conversation	Drama English
15:00 - 15:50	Conversation	Conversation	Conversation	Conversation	Drama English
	Jan 25	Jan 26	Jan 27	Jan 28	Jan 29
10:00 - 11:00	Conversation	Speaking / Listening	Video Discussion	Grammar Activity	Grammar Activity
11:00 - 12:00	Conversation	Grammar Activity	Drama Writing	Reading / Speaking	Reading / Discussion
12:00 - 13:00	Role Playing	Script Writing	Conversation	Drama Script Writing	Drama Preparation
14:00 - 14:50	Reading / Discussion	Drama English	Conversation	Drama Activity	Final Drama
15:00 - 15:50	Video Discussion	Drama English	Drama Activity	Drama Activity	Presentation

The program culminated in a final video project. Beginner level students were asked to copy a scene from their favorite movie or TV show. Translations to English were required in the case of a non-English scene; however, this did not happen. Intermediate students were asked to film a reimagining of an old fairy-tale set in modern times. High-intermediate students were asked to create a unique story. Performances were recorded and edited by the students. All students viewed the final video of each group. UPEP held a movie matinee event and allowed the students to introduce their own videos, while watching the videos of others.

The structure of UPEP did not allow for many activities outside of the final project, or outside of the classroom due to the chilly winter weather. Spending that much time everyday in a classroom creates a diminishing return on attention and future programs will benefit from incorporating more activities that require movement, and activities that are able to be completed in one session.

III. RESEARH METHOD

1. Participants

In this study, the participants were between the ages of 18 and 20. A total of 50 students (16 male; 34 female), and five (3 male; 2 female) native English speaking instructors, participated in UPEP during this time. All student participants came from different high schools throughout South Korea. The student's anticipated university majors included: nursing, health information management, dental hygiene, early childhood development, mortuary science, liberal arts, health and environmental safety and radiology. At the time of UPEP, an informal survey showed that a majority of students had never participated in an English camp or immersion program. Further, no student reported having lived in an English speaking country.

The five native English speaking instructors were full-time faculty members at E University with 4-10 years of university teaching experience with students of all skill levels. All of the instructors had at least two sessions of experience in English camps or immersion programs. All instructors had several years of experience creating materials, for use in the classroom. These materials include topics such as: 4-skills, conversation, screen English, business English, interview English, travel English, speech and presentation etc. The instructors came from multiple countries, including: two instructors from the US, one Canadian, one Irish, and one British.

2. Procedure & Data Collection

A phone-test was used to determine the student's speaking and listening abilities by asking a series of questions and evaluating the student's responses for a variety factors including fluency, completeness, grammar, vocabulary, speed and length of response. Their scores on this test determined their initial level. These levels were 'beginner' 'intermediate' and 'high-intermediate.' There was no threshold on scores. The total number of students was divided amongst the levels, with the highest 15 scores going into the high-intermediate group, the next 18 and lowest 17 going into intermediate and beginner, respectively. The Phone-test was a TELT (Test, Evaluation, Learning, Training) OPIc developed by N.E Company in Seoul, Korea in 2013.

Next, to measure the effects of UPEP the questionnaires were used to find out the perceptions of the students and instructors. Following the completion their final assignment, on the final day of the program, students were given the questionnaire regarding UPEP. Instructors were given a different questionnaire, regarding UPEP, to be finished within one week of UPEP's completion. Responses to the questionnaire were

garnered from the participants' direct experience, observations and perceptions of UPEP.

The student questionnaire (APPENDIX A) contained four categories measuring their perception on: UPEP, Instructors, Post program self-reflection, Satisfaction overall. The four categories contained a total of 23 questions. These questions were adopted from Seong, Reed, & Chang's (2012). For these questions students were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with each statement on a five-point Likert-type scale. Ratings ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Scores were computed by assigning points to each of the 23 questions. Further, there were two open-ended questions used to garner feedback for further research questions and UPEP programs: What are the merits of UPEP?; Suggestions and comments for UPEP. Finally, students were also asked to submit open-ended reflection papers, written in Korean, regarding UPEP, following completion of the program. Students were given one A4-sized piece of paper and 24 hours to complete the assignment.

A questionnaire for instructors was composed of a different battery of questions, while maintaining the use of the five-point scale, with the fifth position being labeled as "Not Applicable." The survey questions were created by the program coordinator to evaluate the instructor's perceptions of the program and the program's efficacy. The coordinator did not reference any specific studies, but instead used common sense questions to evaluate the program in general. The shortcomings of the instructor survey include a lack of support from previous studies and a failure to provide an initial survey for a direct comparison of perceptions, pre and post UPEP. Aside from general demographic information, the instructor survey consisted of six categories including: Student Preliminary Levels, Class Materials, Program Effectiveness, Student Performance, Program Design and Implementation, and Instructor Self-Evaluation. Further, there were a total of six open-ended questions used to garner feedback for further research questions and UPEP feedback.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the survey for both students and instructors were successfully able to provide the feedback necessary to improve programs such as these as well as guide future research for UPEP and similar programs. Further, the surveys provided some basic evidence as to the perceived effectiveness of immersive language programs.

There were no statistically significant responses for the "disagree" and "strongly disagree" options. This is true when both options are taken individually and also when combined. Alternatively, there were nine items which scored over 80% agreement (A), or strong agreement (SA), rating from the 23 questions given (APPENDIX A). These

items are questions number: 3(Was the Program helpful in gaining self-confidence in using English?, 6 (Did the instructors prepare for classes and were they enthusiastic?), 7 (Did the instructors give good content and proper explanation?), 8 (Were the instructors professional?), 9 (Was the classroom environment pleasant?), 10 (Did the instructors manage the class properly?), 14 (Was a level test was necessary for the program?), 15 (Was the phone speaking test adequate for their level placement?) and 20 (Was this program overall satisfactory?.

TABLE 2

Over 80% Agreement Items **n(%)**

No	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
3	0(0%)	2(4%)	6(12%)	34(70%)	7(14%)
6	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(2%)	28(57%)	20(41%)
7	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(8%)	32(65%)	13(27%)
8	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(10%)	30(61%)	14(29%)
9	1(2%)	1(2%)	3(6%)	30(61%)	14(29%)
10	1(2%)	1(2%)	6(12%)	34(70%)	7(14%)
14	1(2%)	5(10%)	2(4%)	28(57%)	17(35%)
15	0(0%)	5(0%)	5(19%)	22(45%)	17(35%)
20	0(0%)	1(2%)	9(18%)	26(53%)	13(27%)

84% students said that they gained confidence in English (item 3). Another notable result was a 41% “strongly agree (SA)” rating on item 6 (98% agree in total), “Were the instructors prepared for class and were they enthusiastic?” Since 98% of students said that native instructors were the most important factor in joining an English camp, we believe that student’s expectations of UPEP instructor’s performance, and the instructors’ subsequent excellent performance contributed heavily to the 80% rating regarding UPEP being satisfactory. Another factor which, we believe contributed to the satisfactory rating is that, during UPEP, we combined students from several different majors. Students reported that one of the advantages of UPEP was being able to meet students from other departments. However, in contrast to the 80% satisfactory rating, 51% of students indicated a neutral feeling for item 23, “Would you recommend this program to your friends.” This study failed to foresee the need for follow up questions for items such as these. Future studies will benefit from asking students to provide information as to why they provided certain ratings on certain items. This is one limitation of the Likert-type scale for use in program development.

Further, 92% of students agreed that a level test was necessary for the program (item 14), and 80% agreed that the phone speaking test was adequate for their level placement

(item 15). This is in direct contrast to the instructors' rating of the phone test, which wholly agreed that the phone test was inadequate. This shows that in terms of academics there is a disconnection between student's perceptions of skill and instructor's professional opinions. This indicates that preliminary surveys should be conducted for both instructors and students regarding their perceptions of the program, and its components, in order to compare and contrast perceptions before and after the program.

Another notable results include a 25% disagreement rating on survey item 5, "Were the textbooks an appropriate level for you?" this item also scored a 47% neutral rating for a total of 72% of students that may have benefited from different textbooks. This is also noted in students' comments that say "the [text] book is not good" when providing their open ended comments. The survey did not include specific questions regarding the textbook or the professor created materials. Future studies must include individual questions for individual materials as a way to create a direct comparison.

Finally, open-ended, opinion based, questions were asked in order to guide the development of the UPEP program as well as to find quantitative evidence in support of, and feedback to follow, for the design of future studies on the effectiveness of the UPEP style of immersion programs. For example, the question "What are the advantages of UPEP?" provided responses such as, "I made friends from different departments," "I had confidence," and "Not regular courses." These responses indicated that students enjoyed learning English with native speakers and benefitted from the instructional method and variety of UPEP. When asked for, "Comments and suggestions for UPEP" students replied with comments such as, "the book is not good," "The hours (5 hours) is too long," and "I hope more icebreaking activity programs." These comments mirror the rating of the textbook, as well as, indicated that students would have welcomed more free time and activities built into the schedule. This may reduce stress and provide in class time to reduce their heavy workload. While the analysis of the date revealed the most valuable and least appreciated aspects of UPEP, the main take away is that students mostly enjoyed learning and practicing spoken English with native speakers.

Second, for instructors, the analysis of the instructor surveys (APPENEIX B) revealed few statistically significant results that indicated high agreeability or disagreeability. One notable result is that all instructors surveyed indicated disagreement with the effectiveness of the preliminary phone speaking tests ability to measure students' abilities and subsequent placement. Additionally, in the "Student Performance" section of the survey, the third item measured the instructors' confidence that UPEP would help students improve on their final phone speaking test. This item indicated that all surveyed professors disagreed that they were confident in the students' ability to improve on the exam as a result of UPEP. We believe these two results indicate the need for a new way to evaluate students' abilities before and after the program. This evaluation should also

include a preliminary survey regarding students and instructor perceptions of the program in order to create a direct comparison. One more notable result of the instructor survey is that all instructors agreed, or strongly agreed, that they enjoyed UPEP 2016 and would volunteer to work the program again in the future.

For the instructors, six general open questions were given (APPENDIX B). One instructor, with 8 years of experience at the university level, and multiple experiences in immersion programs said the following statements: “The vast majority of students [in my classes] participating in the camp (about 85%) had never experienced a camp – ANY camp – before.” “…the greatest benefit of this camp was that students improved their speaking skills as well as their self-confidence.” Finally, “Students overcame a real fear of speaking in English, which is an excellent preparation for their first semester.”

While these statements appear to support the UPEP approach, the same instructor also said the following: “…reading and writing skills did not improve significantly due to the short nature of camp.” “Many students said they did not have adequate time to prepare for the final performance.” Finally, “…the next camp needs to infuse a few more fun elements and reduce some of the seriousness of the final performance.”

The statements show that there is much that can be improved in the UPEP program. Specifically, more focus on soft communication skills with a reduced emphasis on 4-skills based education. Further statements in support of the program include: “…exposure [to 6 hours of English per day] improved their listening proficiency, and their speaking speed in a way that a standard university class, i.e. once per week, would be unable to.” “[UPEP] exposes them to western culture by giving them the opportunity to learn with various native speakers.” Finally, “... create[d] a relaxed/comfortable learning environment to encourage students to communicate freely and not to fear making mistakes.”

The bulk of positive comments all emphasized that the UPEP system showed an observable benefit to the students and, therefore, can be seen as a net positive, regardless of the lack of statistically significant qualitative data indicating an improved test score. Statements involving recommendations and suggestions for improvements were much more detailed. Notable comments are: “Sufficient staffing is absolutely necessary. The January 2016 UPEP program had 5 professors responsible for 6 classes per day for the entire program.” “Focused class time regarding the final assignment should be better planned in the future.” “In 2016 students should be utilizing a more balanced mix of media in the classroom along with traditional means.” “I don’t think it’s an effective idea to have both a textbook and the professor’s booklet… I think we should only have the professor’s booklet.” “I don’t think the creative writing class was necessary for beginner students.” “... in the future there should be some kind of penalty for late students.” Finally, “... it is only a two week course. To expect to see massive improvements in

student's general speaking ability is unrealistic."

The above statements clearly demonstrate that the UPEP program was not without flaws. They also indicate a need to answer fundamental questions as to the efficacy of more materials versus less, mixing instructors throughout the day, and the necessity for accountability on the students' part.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the effectiveness of a program created specifically for incoming freshmen in order to improve programs like UPEP and to help direct further research on immersion programs effectiveness. In this article we have provided information and relevant data on our program development, camp operations and camp effectiveness. Based on analysis of the program we have concluded the following information regarding those items.

In support of immersion programs, our results showed that UPEP succeeded in creating a positive experience for students entering university. This included highly positive exposure to foreign instructors, and positive feelings about the classroom environment. We believe this experience can positively enhance student's feelings towards English language as well as reduce anxiety regarding the transition from high school to university by providing a positive experience in a university setting and exposure to fellow students in an academically similar situation. Based on the qualitative data from the surveys, there are some general conclusions that can be drawn. Most importantly, instructors for immersive language programs are a key component to the student's overall experience. Our data show that our instructors were the most valuable aspect of the UPEP program based on student perceptions.

Regarding the development of these programs, development should take place with more time to secure an appropriate number of instructors. At least, there should be a 1:1 ratio of classes to instructors so that a single instructor is only responsible for planning, prepping and creating materials for one class per day, if they wish to do so. Further, scheduling should include an appropriate level of activities based on non-academic English in order to help reduce the above-mentioned stress and disinterest arising from a time consuming workload.

For class room operations and effectiveness, our data indicated that there is a need to reduce and refocus the materials used in the classroom. Student surveys showed that this program had too much time spent on academics and not enough "program" related materials and some mentioned that students want more ice-breaker activities in the beginning of the program to improve their comfort. Students also commented that they

would have liked speakers from campus to come and speak with them. Also, they would have appreciated more of an introduction to the campus and campus life. For example, touring the facilities and classrooms related to the students' majors. We found that there was a level of stress, and eventual disinterest, associated with the exceptional academic workload created during the two-week program. This, combined with data regarding textbook usage, further supports the instructor's feedback that textbook use should be reduced, or eliminated entirely. We believe the stress and disinterest contributed to the low number of students who would recommend UPEP to a friend. Future UPEP sessions, which are advertised as being specifically for incoming freshman, and labeled as a way to prepare for University, should focus on a more well-rounded approach to prepping for university and not purely focused on academics.

For future research into programs like UPEP, several of the limitations of this study arose from lacking a direct comparison between preconceptions of the UPEP program and the eventual experience in UPEP. Surveys must be conducted before and after the program in order to accurately measure perceptions and provide more valid results as to the effectiveness of programs like UPEP. Our data showed that there was a disconnection between the instructor's perceptions of students' skills and workload, and the students' perceptions and expectations. Further research should be done to measure students' perceptions and expectations of their own skills and the amount of work they will expected to achieve prior to entering immersion programs, and then comparing that data to overall satisfaction at the conclusion of the program. Further, the Likert-type scale used for measuring responses is limited in its ability to suggest improvements. Our data showed items on our surveys that could be improved, however, without suggestions for improvement from students and instructors, the program planners are at a disadvantage when attempting to improve the program. Therefore, a more detailed survey that asks for suggestions for specific items, and not just general suggestions for improvement, will greatly benefit programs like UPEP in the future.

Recommendations for future immersion programs similar to UPEP, and further research on the topic, must address the following shortcomings. First, any initial skill assessment must be able to adequately measure a students' ability to participate in an immersion program and not simply their ability to communicate via telephone. Second, UPEP 2016 at E University was sponsored by the university and was not used as a recruitment tool, but rather as a preparatory course to bolster students' general abilities prior to the beginning of their first semester. As a result, there was very little motivation for students to perform in the program, and also, to perform well on the tests administered before and after the program, since they were not being evaluated in a way that was meaningful to their wallets or academic performance. Future programs must incentivize the program in a meaningful way, the obvious choice being credit given to

students, or scholarship awards. We believe this will not only improve student performance, but also improve overall evaluations as there is a higher level of gravity given to the program.

UPEP was specifically designed as an immersion program for students who had already committed and were prepared to attend their first year of university. The purpose of UPEP was to prepare them in, in general, for the rigors of their first semester, while at the same time exposing them to education through English and foreign instructors, with the goal of leaving them more prepared than their peers who did not participate in UPEP. Further studies should compare the perceptions of students who participated in the program with students who did not. This should be done during the first week of class, with follow up throughout the first semester. A comparison of students' perceptions, as well as, academic performance, could provide further evidence as to the efficacy of immersion programs for university students, as well as, specifically targeted groups of students, as in the case of UPEP.

UPEP was generally successful with the students and provided clear qualitative evidence that the Instructors are a key to making students feel comfortable. Certain classroom materials were implements for creating stress and displeasure within aspects of the program. Further study is needed on the exact correlation of these things, but we believe that this study provides a good foundation for the further analysis of immersion programs like UPEP.

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APPENDIX A

Student Survey

1. Was UPEP helpful for you?
2. Was UPEP helpful in improving your English Conversation skills?
3. Was UPEP helpful in gaining self-confidence in using English?
4. Was UPEP interesting?
5. Were the textbooks an appropriate level for you?

6. Did the instructors prepare for classes and were they enthusiastic?
7. Did the instructors give good content and proper explanation?
8. Were the instructors professional?
9. Was the classroom environment pleasant?
10. Did the instructors manage the class properly?
11. Did the program improve your conversation ability?
12. Did the program improve your vocabulary?
13. Did the program improve your writing ability?
14. Was a level test was necessary for the program?
15. Was the phone speaking test adequate for their level placement?
16. Did the program boost your listening ability?
17. Did the program improve your ability to cope in English speaking situations?
18. Did the program help further your English abilities?
19. Did the program motivate you to want to study more English?
20. Was this program overall satisfactory?
21. Was the service of this program satisfactory?
22. Do you think that this program will be helpful for future English courses you participate in?
23. Would you recommend this program to your friends or classmates?

APPENDIX B

Professor Survey

A. Student Preliminary Levels

1. The preliminary placement test accurately scored student's speaking abilities.
2. The preliminary test predicated a student's overall English skill.
3. Students were placed in an appropriate level for their ability.
4. Classes had an even distribution of students of a similar skill level.

B. Class Materials

5. The program provided a sufficient variety of courses appropriate for an immersive language program.
6. All scheduled classes were appropriate for the improvement of student's overall English abilities.
7. The textbook used was appropriate for the skill level of the student's in class.
8. The materials prepared for the Professor Booklet were appropriate for the student's skill levels.

C. Program Effectiveness

9. UPEP 2016 was effective at improving student's English speaking skills.
10. UPEP 2016 was effective at improving student's English listening skills.
11. UPEP 2016 was effective at improving student's English reading skills.
12. UPEP 2016 improved student's overall English communication skills.
13. UPEP 2016 improved students' confidence in their ability to communicate in English.

D. Student Performance

14. Students' communication abilities improved throughout UPEP 2016.

E. Program Design and Implementation

15. UPEP 2016 successfully completed its intended purpose of improving students' English communication skills.
16. UPEP professors were qualified to provide an immersive language experience.
17. Professors created equally successful learning environments regardless of level.
18. UPEP 2016 was adequately designed for an immersive language program.
19. UPEP 2016 was well planned and organized.
20. UPEP 2016 was implemented without problems.
21. UPEP programs at E. University should be recommended as an immersive language program.

F. Instructor Self Evaluation

22. I adequately prepared for my classes at all levels.
23. The materials I created for the Professor Booklet were useful for creating an immersive language experience.
24. I would volunteer to teach for the UPEP program at E. University in the future.
25. I enjoyed teaching during UPEP 2016.
26. I believe UPEP was successful at improving students' general English language skills.

G. General Comments: Please write your responses and comments in the boxes below.

1. What, if anything, do you feel is the greatest benefit of UPEP at E. University?
2. Regarding technology and materials, how could the UPEP program improve in the future?
3. Regarding scheduling, which classes should be added or removed from UPEP?
4. Regarding staffing, how could scheduling or staffing change to create improvements in UPEP.
5. In general, how could the UPEP program improve in the future?
6. Please use the space below to write any general comments regarding UPEP.

Examples in: English
Applicable Language: English
Applicable Levels: College

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