

Establishing Learning Resource Center in the Department of Languages and Translation at the University of Tabuk

Dr. Abdulrahman Alfahadi

Dept. of English Languages & Translation

Faculty of Education & Arts

The University of Tabuk

Tabuk, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Email: aalfahadi@ut.ed.sa

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

Language proficiency is best raised through active and frequent use. It is important to provide students with maximum English exposure as well as meaningful and purposeful activities through which they can learn and apply the target language.

A rich English language learning environment can be created by making full use of the time and resources both inside and outside the classroom. Based on previous studies and experiences of peer universities, developing learning resource center has become widespread in many universities, colleges, and schools.

Accordingly, the current project attempts to develop a learning resource center for the Languages and Translation Department at the University of Tabuk. The project attempts to create a convenient place for the students of Tabuk University to facilitate and develop their language skills through resources and technologies. To achieve this objective of this project, the researcher has designed two questionnaires for the teachers and the students to collect the attitudes toward developing a learning resource center for the Department of Languages and Translation at the University of Tabuk.

Keywords: Learning Resource Center, Department of Languages and Translation, Students.

Introduction

Learning resources centers (LRCs) are not a new concept, they have been known since the 1960s when the traditional school libraries started the transition into resource centers which concurrently offered services for teachers and students. LRC contains not only printed materials but rather comprises all other communication means to give a concentration of facilitates to support self-learning methods. This view has encouraged educational trends to employ computers in the learning process. In the mid of the 1960s and 1970s, there were also the methods of self-learning, from programmed learning, learning for mastery, and learning throughout audio media to passing earliest beginnings. Later on, information technology and teaching and learning theories have added a new dimension to the learning resource center concept. Most LRCs are established to achieve many goals like:

- The strong connection between learning resources and method, and passing away supporting and the cultural general role of school libraries into the essential, accurately planned, role to achieve the method and its purposes.
- The book and printed material become not the only information resource.
- Developing educational theories, international tends to self-learning, taking into account differences among individuals, making the learner the axis of the educational process, and changing the teacher's role into a leader and facilitator of the learning process.
- Learning resource centers concentrate on the amalgamation of resources, information, and communication technologies with educational practices inside centers.
- Defining the goals of learning resource center programs, implementing and evaluating plans to achieve these goals.
- Center activities planning and amalgamate them with school educational programs.
- Establishing a balanced group that contains printed and non-printed educational and learning materials supporting curricula.
- School man-power development through continuous training during the period of teacher's service and ensuring technical resources, and notifying them about new materials, and sharing with them in decision-making processes related to resources purchasing.
- Presenting consultation services in the educational techniques field and teaching methods.

- Ensuring educational techniques production requirements and acquainting about methods of their production and amalgamating them into educational curricula.
- Make the periodical maintenance of materials and educational instruments available in centers.
- Encouraging students to self-learning.

The success of a learning resource center depends firstly on the range of its engagement in modern learning methods implementation, which gives more concentration on learners' role within the learning process and evaluates work mechanism. The working mechanism in learning resource center requires following and integrating two methods as follows:

1. Benefiting from the learning resource center requires each teacher to implement one lesson weekly (or according to school classes number) in the learning resource center and to depend, in this lesson, mainly on group learning method (cooperative learning).
2. In the second method, benefiting from the learning resource center does not require the teacher to implement the class lesson in the learning resource center, but he has to follow the same previous procedures, then to allow the students to implement their projects referring to learning resource center outside the lesson time, and students to be given, in this case, more time to implement their projects, then to do a presentation and discussion in the classroom.

The learning center implements a group of activities, designed and implemented by teachers in cooperation with a center specialist. Methods of implementing these activities differ according to educational grades and also focuses on the implementation of the modern, educational, and learning methods. Such activities can be:

- Reading activities: aim to sow reading habits those like; summarization and book presentation.
- Learning activities: these activities are done by students depending on themselves to support their learning.
- Educational activities: these activities are done by the teacher to support students' learning.
- Information search: searching on the internet and using references.
- Cultural activities: these activities to be done by students to improve their cultural levels such as school radio, seminars, lectures, and competitions.
- Cooperative activities: these activities are done by students to help the learning resource center achieve its aims.

Learning resources centers are the correct way to activate the library and to amalgamate it into the educational procedure as well as it is apart from it, but not included in the subsidiary utilities. One of the biggest problems that still face libraries is that college libraries still play a general cultural role leading to isolate them away from the educational process. So they have become a place to wait for delayed lessons and also an escape for every lazy teacher, who does not want to carry out their lessons, whereas the learning resources center project has put the center at the heart of the educational process being supported by necessary technical and librarian equipment needed for teachers' educational tasks within a modern environment. LRCs are also supporting the rooms with supplementary curricula and educational resources that are suitable for age types, so learning resource centers become a necessary place where teachers resort to helping them implementing their tasks and achieving their educational aims.

Experience of Other Universities

The mission of the LECs is to introduce Academic Bridge Program (ABP) students to the university library environment and to develop their information literacy skills while supporting their English language learning. These aims and the resulting expansion of students' general knowledge encourage students' retention and promote success as student's advance to the university degree programs.

This mission also reflects the Zayed University Learning Outcomes (ZULOs) and the Library's mission to educate information-literate students who are equipped to locate, evaluate and use the information for independent, lifelong learning. The information literacy instruction provided by the LEC forms the foundation of the Curricular Information Literacy Integration Plan at Zayed University (Alomran, 2007).

The National African Language Resource Center, at the University of Wisconsin Madison, was established in September 1999; it is a federally funded, nonprofit national foreign language center dedicated to the advancement of African language teaching and learning in the United States.

Strayer University's Learning Resources Center is available to students on all campuses and online. The LRC supports and enhances the classroom experience through book and print resources, online databases, research assistance, placement testing, and career services.

Students are encouraged to use the combined LRC circulating book collection, consisting of more than 90,000 resources. Circulating items located in the library's online catalog can be requested for use from any LRC by contacting an LRC Manager or for online students, by filling out a request form. About 10,000 volumes are added each year to the combined collection. More than 350,000 additional books are available to students for direct borrowing along with 55,000 e-books for immediate use through a partnership with another university.

Strayer University's Virtual Learning Resources Center's 16 online databases provide remote access to hundreds of thousands of full-text periodical articles, transcripts of select television and radio programs, financial data on public and private companies, legal findings and treatises, 10 national newspapers, and special research reports on computer security and the U.S. government. The LRC page also offers guidance on APA style, tutorials for conducting research, and links to useful Internet resources.

The website's special feature, Ask Your Librarian, provides research support from professional librarians. Requests are answered between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday, and are generally returned within 24 hours. The LRC enriches course support and the academic experience of students by offering a variety of information resources and services in both on-campus and online platforms to accommodate various learning styles and access needs (Crawford, 1970).

Project Problem

A large body of research & projects has been carried out to study the role of learning resource centers. Therefore, the current project attempts to develop a learning resource center in the Department of Languages and Translation at the University of Tabuk.

Project Objectives

The project attempts to achieve the following objectives:

1. To improve the students' level in English.
2. To encourage EFL students at The University of Tabuk to use modern technology like the internet, Audio CDs, small library, Teaching programs, and call.
3. To encourage EFL students to use the internet as a means of vocabulary learning.
4. To prepare a suitable place for the students to practice English outside the classroom.

The services that the LCR will offer to the students of the University of Tabuk:

- 1-Advisory service: language advisors will give helping and advice on language learning.
- 2-Audio CDs: there is a large collection of audio recordings for English conversations and modern educational CDs.
- 3-A large number of important titles which will help students to learn to communicate with modern English websites.
- 4-CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning)

The Strategy of Work in Learning Resource Center

In the past, learning and education simply meant face-to-face lectures, reading books or printed handouts, taking notes, and completing assignments generally in the form of answering questions or writing essays. In short, education, learning, and teaching were considered impossible without a teacher, books, and chalkboards. Today, education and training have taken on a whole new meaning. Computers are an essential part of every classroom, and teachers are using DVDs, CD-ROMs, and videos to show students how things work and operate. Students can interact with the subject matters through the use of such web-based tools and CD-ROMs. Moreover, each student can progress at his/her own pace. Through the use of equipment in the learning resources room students can practice the four skills; they can use the internet to learn a language and to make a conversation with native speakers to learn the language via real communication.

Learning Resource Center Contents

An LRC should consist of four laptops, routers, a small library, English CDs, round tables, chairs, E-library for English resources and supervisors.

Methodology

The project team revises the experiences of other universities in developing learning resource centers like Zayed

University and other universities to start the plan of developing the learning resource center for the English Language Department at the University of Tabuk.

To achieve the objectives of the project, the team had designed two questionnaires to evaluate the attitudes of the lecturers toward developing a learning resource center for the Department of Languages and Translation at the University of Tabuk, the responses to the questionnaires were analyzed statically to prove the importance of this project.

Related Studies

Many researchers have already discussed the importance of learning resource centers from several perspectives; some of these discussions are mentioned below about the previous studies.

Philips (1990) sought to investigate the satisfaction of students and teachers with a particular educational program used in teaching learners with learning disabilities in resource centers. This program aimed to develop students' self-awareness and the results revealed that parents were highly satisfied with the resource centers.

Stephenson (1992) set out to explore the level of satisfaction of the parents of learners with learning disabilities in terms of integration in the resource center, regular classroom, and special classes. The results show that the parents were highly satisfied with their children joining the resource centers and the services provided for them.

Susana (1995) investigated the appreciation of learners with learning disabilities for the services provided in the resource center. The results revealed that the learners in the resource center desired more assistance from the teacher.

Bentum & Aron (2003) explored the effect of instruction in the resource center on IQ. The results indicated that teaching the students in the resource center had not helped the learners improve their reading skills.

Naser (2006) assessed resource centers in Jordan and proposed a new educational program for them. The results of this study showed the need to reconsider many elements in resource rooms including diagnosis, equipment, curriculum, teaching strategies, and the application of educational technology.

Fraihat (2007) conducted a study that looked at services in the resource centers from the perspective of parents and regular classroom teachers. The results revealed that both were satisfied with the services offered in the resource centers for learners with disabilities.

Al-Natour, Alkhmara, & Al-Smadi, (2008) investigated the assessment practices used by resource center teachers to identify learners with learning disabilities and the obstacles encountered in these practices. The results revealed that the teachers most often depended on achievement tests to assess learners and they encountered obstacles in the referral process.

Ismail, Al-Zoubi, Bani Abdel Rahman, and Shabatat (2009) measured the effect of a training program module on improving knowledge competencies for resource center teachers. The results revealed that the module did improve competencies for teachers in the experimental group.

Al-Khateeb and Hadidi (2009) assessed the level of satisfaction of resource center teachers and the parents of learners with learning disabilities about the services provided in the resource rooms. Teachers in the resource centers were satisfied with the work in the resource room but not with the parents who failed to participate in the programs of the resource rooms.

Al-Zoubi, Ismail, and Bani Abdel Rahman (2010) analyzed an in-service training program aimed at improving the performance competencies of resource center teachers. The results revealed that the training program has improved the performance competencies of teachers in the experimental group.

Moreover, Sabbah & Shanaah (2010) investigated the effect of resource centers from the perspective of principals, teachers, and educational supervisors. The results showed that principals, teachers, and educational supervisors were highly satisfied with the effectiveness of the resource center and its tools, methodologies, educational programs, and equipment.

Bataineh and Al-Shehry (2010) explored the effectiveness of different resource center components from the perspective of resource room teachers. In this study, resource center teachers ranked aides and methods first, the progress of the educational program second, the instructional curriculum third, and resource center equipment fourth/last.

Somaily, Al-Zoubi, and Bani Abdel Rahman (2012) looked at the attitudes of parents of children with learning disabilities towards the resource room. The attitudes of parents were generally quite positive. The educational program applied in the resource centers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a parallel curriculum, focused on the basic skills of

reading and arithmetic. This program depended on the assumption that the learners in the resource room had not mastered basic skills in reading and arithmetic. In the skills assessment and diagnoses stage, however, the resource center instructor defined the strengths and weaknesses of each learner. The instructor thus determined the extent of the disability before designing an educational program based on the learner’s existing reading and arithmetic skills.

The preferred instructional methodology is one based on small group work with learners who share the same weaknesses.

Depending on the previous studies, it seems important to develop a learning resource center in the Languages and Translation Department at the University of Tabuk.

Findings and figures

The Sample of the study included 25 teachers and 40 students. The responses to the questionnaires came as follows:

No	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
*	The importance of learning resource center for teachers.					
1	The learning recourse center supports the role of Teachers.	19	6			
2	Learning recourse center motivates the students to learn.	24	1			
3	As a teacher , I prefer to teach in a learning recourse center.	25				
4	The learning recourse center helps teachers to be active.	20	5			
5	Teachers can teach better in learning recourse center.	23	1	1		
6	Learning recourse center is a place for modern teaching methods.	22	3			
7	Learning recourse center creates a teaching learning environment.	21	4			
*	The importance of learning resource center for students.					
8	I think that learning recourse center is a new technical method that helps us to learn better.	33	6	1		
9	The students can better improve their language in the learning recourse center.	35	5			
10	Learning recourse center will develop learning outcomes.	26	8	6		
11	The students can use the learning recourse center for extra activities.	22	6	12		
12	The learning recourse center is a way of communication with other cultures.	32	8			
13	Learning recourse center will waste the time of students.		10		30	
14	English Language Department needs the learning recourse center.	31	9			
15	Learning resource center will be the first step for establishing learning resource center for the whole university.	40				

The numbers in percentages

No	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
*	The importance of learning resource center for teachers.					
1	The learning resource center supports the role of Teachers.	76%	24%			
2	Learning resource center motivates the students to learn.	96%	4%			
3	As a teacher , I prefer to teach in a learning resource center.	100%				
4	The learning recourse center helps teachers to be active.	80%	20%			
5	Teachers can teach better in learning resource center.	92%	4%	4%		
6	Learning resource center is a place for modern teaching methods.	88%	12%			
7	Learning resource center creates a teaching learning environment.	84%	16%			
*	The importance of learning resource center for students.					
8	I think that learning resource center is a new technical method that helps us to learn better.	76%	12%	12%		
9	The students can better improve their language in the learning resource center.	70%	30%			
10	Learning resource center will develop learning outcomes.	66%	20%	14%		
11	The students can use the learning resource center for extra activities.	54%	16%	30%		
12	The learning resource center is a way of communication with other cultures.	78%	22%			
13	Learning resource center will waste the time of students.		26%		74%	
14	English Language Department needs the learning resource center.	76%	24%			
15	Learning resource center will be the first step for establishing learning resource center for the whole university.	100%				

The Importance of Having a Learning Resource Room for Teachers

A group of teachers was surveyed on the importance of having a learning resource center. A 76% of those teachers strongly agreed that such a learning resource center supports the role of teachers whereas 24% just agreed. Almost 96% of them strongly agreed that the learning resource center motivates the students to learn and only 4% just agreed to this. Unanimously, 100%, they prefer teaching at an institution that houses a learning resource room. It has been noted that 80% of this group strongly agreed that the learning resource center helps teachers to be active. Only 20% just agreed to this concept. 92% of the teachers strongly agreed that teachers can teach better educational institutions that are equipped with a learning resource center whereas another 4% of teachers agreed to that and the other 4% of the students were neutral. Moreover, 88% of those teachers believe that to be able to utilize modern teaching methods, a learning resource room should be made available to the benefit of the teachers. Another 12% just agreed to that. It is worth mentioning that 84% of the teachers strongly agreed that when using a learning recourse center effectively, it creates a favorable learning environment inside the classroom; another 16% just agreed to that.

The Importance of Having a Learning Resource Room for Students

A group of students was surveyed on the importance of having a learning resource center for them. 76% of those students strongly agreed that having a learning resource center that is utilized effectively by teachers helps them to learn better. Another 12% of the sample has just agreed to this whereas another 12% of the teachers were neutral. 70% of the surveyed students strongly agreed that they can better improve their language learning skills once those resources are used by students; 30% of them only agreed to that. 66% of those students believed that such a learning resources room would develop and improve their learning outcomes. 20% of them just agreed to that while 14% were neutral. Almost 54% of the students strongly agreed that they can use the learning resource center to get and use extra activities, while 16% agreed to that and another 30% did not give their opinion (regarded and dealt with as neutral). 78% of the students reported that they think they can communicate with and expose to other cultures through this room. Another 22% of those students did agree to that. Amazingly, 74% disagree that using the Learning resource center will be a waste of their time. Surprisingly, 26% agreed to that. Moreover, 76% of the surveyed group of students strongly agreed that having a language resource center is a must for all English language departments whereas 24% just agreed to that understanding. Unanimously, all students strongly agreed that such a learning resource center will be the stepping stone for establishing a learning resource center for the whole university.

Conclusion

It is clear that installing a learning resource center in any educational institution is considered a plus to this institution; this procedure should be followed up at high academic levels. Such a learning resource center should be looked at as a window that our students and teachers should seize to improve their language skills and to communicate with other cultures.

References

- Alomran, Hamad Ibrahim; (2007) *Learning Resource Centres in Saudi Arabia: A study to the Reality with A plan for an Ideal center*. Riyadh: Riyadh Girls University
- Al-Khateeb, J & Hadidi, M. (2009). Teachers' and Mothers' satisfaction with resource room programs in Jordan. *Journal of the International Association of Special Education*, 10, 56-59.
- Al-Khateeb, J & Hadidi, M. (2010). *Introduction to Special Education*, Amman: Dar Al-Fikker.
- Al-Natour, M., Alkhamra, H., & Al-Smadi, Y. (2008). Assessment of learning disabled students in Jordan. *International Journal of Special Education*, 23, 68-75.
- Al-Smadi, J. (1996). The effectiveness of resource room in improving reading and math skills for students with slowlearner. *Abhath Al Yarmouk*, 12, 121-146
- Al-Zoubi, S., Bani Abdel Rahman, M., & Ismail, H. (2010). The Effect of in-service Training Program in Improving Performance Competencies for Resource Room Teachers in Jordan. *Educators' Digest*, 10, 4-11
- Bataineh, O., & Al-Shehry, K. (2010). The reality of learning resource rooms in Madinah Al-Monawara. *Journal of Psychological & Educational Studies*, 5, 2-38.
- Bentum, K., & Aaron, P. (2003). Does reading instruction in learning disability resource rooms really work? *Reading Psychology*, 24, 361-382.
- Fraihat, S. (2007). *Resource Room Services from the perspective of the regular classroom teachers and Parents of learners with learning disabilities*. an unpublished master's Thesis, University of Jordan.
- Ismail, H., Al-Zoubi, S., Bani Abdel Rahman, M., & Al-Shabatat, A. (2009). Competency-Based Teacher Education: A training module for improving knowledge competencies for resource room teachers in Jordan. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(2), 166-178.
- Naser, M. (2006). *Assessment the resource rooms in Jordan and suggesting an educational Program for them*. An Unpublished Doctorate Dissertation, Amman Arab University.
- Sabbah, S., & Shanaah, H. (2010). The Efficiency of Resources Rooms for Special Needs in Government Schools from Headmasters, Teachers of Resources Rooms, and Educational Counselors Perspective. *An-Najah University Journal for Research Humanities*, 24, 2187-2226.
- Somaily, H., Al-Zoubi, S., & Bani Abdel Rahman, M. (2012). Parents of students with learning disabilities attitudes towards resource room. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education*, 1, 1-5.
- Susana, E. (1995). Perspective of Students with Learning Disabilities about Special Education Placement. *European Journal of Special Education*, 10, 210-226.