

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### The Context

Paradise English is a homestay English program on Boracay Island, Philippines, that accepts Adult students from Korea staying for a one month minimum, offering them accommodation with a native English speaking teacher and twenty weekly hours of English study. Students take four classes, including a grammar class, a conversation class, a reading and writing class, and an elective class on one of a variety of subjects. The class sizes vary from three to eight students, with an average of six. Paradise English accepts students of any ability levels but very few are below the level of high-beginner or above high-intermediate. Each student is concurrently enrolled in four classes with four different instructors, with a heavy emphasis on developing conversation skills through communicative learning methods. The classes use American Headway as their textbook supplemented by various task-based activities developed by the instructors. Time spent using English outside the classroom is also considered an integral part of the experience and the majority of students live with one of their instructors. There are daily, after class activities (such as beach trips, sailing, volleyball, and soccer) in which English is the medium of conversation. These activities always include at least one English teacher and usually last about two hours.

## The Subjects

**Teachers:** There are four full-time teachers employed by Paradise English. Three are male and one is female. They vary in age from twenty seven to forty three and from 3 to 12 years teaching experience. One of them is American, two are Canadian, and one is from the United Kingdom. Two teachers have Masters' degrees in education and two of them have CELTA certificates. Two of them have experience teaching children in their home countries and two of them have experience only in ESL. All for of them have ESL experience teaching both children and adults. Data collected from all four of them has been used in this study.

**Students:** The subjects of this study are Adult Korean students at Paradise English Academy, in Boracay, Philippines. There was no sampling, and the subjects are the entire student population that fits within the following parameters:

1. They are adults
2. They are fulltime students, enrolled in the four-course package program.
3. They came to Boracay specifically for this program and are living in one of the four arrangements provided by the school.
4. Their level is between high-beginner and high-intermediate

These parameters were chosen because the great majority of the students at Paradise English fit into these categories, and there are not enough exceptions to justify widening the scope.

For the latitudinal study the following two restrictions are defined.

1. They planned to stay at least twelve weeks.

2. They had not yet stayed over twelve weeks.

These restrictions were implemented so as not to skew the data. Because the independent variable of the latitudinal study is the number of weeks students have spent in the program, students planning to stay for less than twelve weeks would not have been equally distributed, being over-represented in the independent variable's lower values and not represented at all when the number of weeks spent in the program approached twelve. Because students who intend to stay for shorter periods may share different beliefs from those who intend to stay for longer ones, this would have created a data bias. After the exclusions, there were 53 subjects participating in the study.

The longitudinal study included all students who were present for all three surveys. Because of this requirement, the restrictions imposed on the subjects of the latitudinal study (regarding the length of time in which they had already been there and in which they planned to stay) did not apply. The responses of students present for only one or two of the surveys were not included in this report. There were 35 subjects participating in this study.

### The Data Collection Instrument

This study used a simplified instructor version of the BALLI, which is provided in full in Appendix A. The BALLI yielded data about student and teacher beliefs following the Likert scale, which was then collapsed into three categories (Agree, Neutral, and disagree) for purposes as analysis. Although the entire BALLI

was administered to both the instructors and the students, some of the items were not used in this study. A list of these items and the rationale behind their exclusion is discussed in the Results section

## Procedure

**Step 1: Determining the teachers' actual and portrayed beliefs:** The BALLI was given to each teacher individually and they were asked to fill out the sheet and return it at their convenience. The instructions were listed clearly on the top of the sheet, and because the BALLI had already been so well vetted it was determined to be unnecessary to give them further instructions. Unfortunately, two of the teachers were not made fully aware of the necessity to give numeric responses to every single BALLI item, and there were several instances where they chose instead to give a written explanation of their beliefs. Because only four teachers were included in the study, it was vital to receive full data from all of them, so each was prompted a second time for a response that would fit into the study. After responding individually to the entire survey, they were asked as a group which beliefs they believed to be important to success in language learning. They were later asked to fill out a revised BALLI survey, using new directions prompting them to answer based on the beliefs about language learning portrayed by their preferred teaching methods, and the beliefs portrayed by the teaching methods they are using in their specific program. Those new directions read as follows:

**PLEASE READ REVISED DIRECTIONS BEFORE PROCEEDING**

A few weeks ago, you were asked to fill out this survey based on the beliefs you have about language learning. Now, I would like for you to fill out this survey based on the following beliefs:

1. For each item give a numeric response based on the belief you think is portrayed by the teaching method you prefer.
2. For each item give a numeric response based on the belief you think you are portraying to your students using the methods and materials provided by the Paradise English curriculum.

1) strongly agree, 2) agree, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) disagree, 5) strongly disagree.

Questions 4 and 11 are slightly different and you should mark them as indicated.

Because these directions were more complicated, the teachers were asked to fill out the survey in the researcher's presence, allowing the researcher to monitor their progress and clear up any confusion they might have. The teachers' responses to this survey are listed in the Results section of this paper.

**Step 2: Determining the students' beliefs:** All teachers administered the BALLI to their students simultaneously, during their first, morning class. This ensured that all students who attended class were surveyed and that they were only surveyed once. It also ensured (at least for the latitudinal study) that there would be no time for discussion between the classes about their responses to the items. The instructors were directed to monitor the students, ensuring silence and checking that they give a numeric response to every item. Even though not all of the students met the requirements for participation in the study, and some of the BALLI items were excluded from the study, all of them were asked to fill out their responses to the entire BALLI. This eliminated the problem of finding a procedure to only include specific students, and allowed the use of the entire, tested BALLI instead of an untested adaptation.

**Step 3: Determining the change in student beliefs:** The BALLI was re-administered two more times at four week intervals. For students who were present

for the prior surveys, this data was used for the longitudinal study. For new students, this data was used for the latitudinal study. This meant that the latitudinal study included more relatively new students than veteran students, but it still avoided the potential data bias described in the Subjects section of this paper. This is explained more fully later in the paper, in the section entitled Critique of Research Methodology.

**Calculations used for the latitudinal study:**

**Correlation between percentages of students who agree with their teachers on the item and the amount of time the students have been in the program:** This study uses Pearson's method to calculate this correlation. The Independent variable is the number of weeks in the program (1-12) and the dependent variable is the percentage of students who agree with their teacher on that belief. This study also uses various abbreviations and classifications for different levels of correlation. Here is a chart describing them:

Table 3: Terms and abbreviations related to Pearson's correlation coefficient

| Abbreviation | meaning              | Interval of Correlation coefficient |
|--------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| VSN          | Very Strong Negative | -1.0 to -0.80                       |
| SN           | Strong Negative      | -0.79 to -0.60                      |
| MN           | Moderate Negative    | -0.59 to -0.40                      |
| WN           | Weak Negative        | -0.39 to -0.20                      |
| NC           | No Correlation       | -0.19 to +0.19                      |
| WP           | Weak Positive        | +0.2 to +0.39                       |
| MP           | Moderate Positive    | +0.40 to +0.59                      |
| SP           | Strong Positive      | +0.60 to +0.79                      |
| VSP          | Very Strong Positive | +0.80 to +1.0                       |

**Statistical significance of the association:** This study conducts a Pearson's chi-square analysis by collapsing the 12 week categories into two categories, (weeks 1-6 and weeks 7-12) and comparing it to the responses (A, N, and D), providing a 3X2 table. Associations are considered statistically significant if they have less than 5% probability of occurring by chance, requiring a chi-square coefficient of at least 5.99.

#### **Calculations used for longitudinal study**

**Total change in agreement with instructors:** The cumulative change in the number of students who agree with their teachers minus the cumulative change in students who disagree with their instructors.

**Statistical significance:** To test statistical significance this study uses the McNemar-Bowker test of symmetry. This study considers the results to be significant at the threshold of .05 probability which occurs when the McNemar-Bowker number is greater than 5.99. This test is an analogue of the Pearson's Chi-Square test used in the latitudinal study, which will make it easier to compare the two results.

**All calculations were performed using Microsoft Excel.**