

TEACHING PREPOSITION- MODELS OF ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: *In this article I am going to give some examples of activities that I have used during my teaching career. As my research paper was based on teaching preposition using both traditional and modern methods, I am going to combine the two of them while building my lesson plans.*

I realized that students like to play and even if they are adolescents they still like doing it. I thought: “why not teaching through playing?” Some of the methods may not be proper to their age, but they enjoyed playing cards, bingo, domino, listening to songs, watching videos, rolling the dice, etc. These are relaxing activities that they prefer and are comfortable with and I thought I could easily use them in my classes to teach new language.

First I am going to describe and present the activities I used in my classes during the entire school year.

Keywords: *preposition, research, paper, teaching preposition, types of activities, play, teaching through playing, high school;*

As a teacher I made a research paper on teaching preposition in high school. Among other things presented in my research paper I mentioned some ways and techniques of teaching preposition and also some types of activities that I had used.

The Objectives of the Research

The experimental activity had the following objectives:

- a) identifying the students’ potential regarding the usage of the preposition and establishing the school performance;
- b) Watching the students’ progress after using the actively- participative methods in teaching the preposition;
- c) Exploring the effectiveness of using both the traditional and modern methods;
- d) Stimulating the students’ creativity by a permissive didactical strategy;
- e) Using both the didactical materials and alternative text books at full efficiency.

1. Research context

I started the experimental activity taking into account the following work hypothesis: *Do the modern methods combined with the traditional ones help students to acquire better knowledge regarding the preposition? Will the experiment class obtain better test results after having used the modern methods in teaching preposition?*

I made an experimental activity at Technical College "Unio- Traian Vuia" in Satu Mare, the theme being *teaching preposition in high school* using both traditional and modern methods.

1.1. The Group of Subjects

A number of 34 students participated at this study case. They were 10th grade students between 15 and 16 of age from the Technical College "Unio-Traian Vuia" in Satu Mare.

The students' reading and writing abilities are according to their age. They were devised into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. What is specific about the experimental group is the fact that they were acted upon by the experimental factor, in accordance with the facts mentioned in the research context to produce some changes in the development of the educational action.

The 10th A grade (X A) students were integrated in the experimental class where both the traditional and modern teaching methods were used while the students in 10th B grade (X B) was the control class where only the traditional teaching methods were used.

2. Description of the instruments used in the research

At the beginning of the school year I chose the classes for my pedagogical research.

After that I tested them using a predictive test which was according to the curriculum and the syllabus.

Then during the entire school year while teaching I used only traditional methods with one class and both traditional and modern methods and techniques with the other class.

In the end using a final test I tested the students again.

During the entire pedagogical research I centralised the data containing the students' grades obtained both at the predictive and final test.

I also made an interpretation containing diagrams and graphics using the data obtained.

The experimental research followed the **next steps**:

Firstly, I wanted to check the English level of the classes by giving the students a predictive test, which I have described in the previous sub-chapter. The predictive test was taken by both classes of students in the same

day. The students in the 10th grade had to complete all the sentences properly.

Then, after the predictive test, the experimental class was provided new information using both modern and traditional methods, while the control class provided new information using only the traditional methods. They all had the same goal, to acquire and develop the abilities of using the preposition in all its forms. These activities and methods were used in a long run during the entire school year.

I also wanted to see if there is a difference in acquiring new information using either traditional methods, or both traditional and modern methods.

After that I gave a final test or summative assessment test to confirm the hypothesis.

Finally, after the final test results in both classes, I made a graphical representation, described in the following chapter, using tables and diagrams containing data related to the students in both classes and their scoring.

The two tests, predictive and final tests, the correcting norms and the scoring together with types of activities, lesson plans, techniques and methods are described in the following chapter.

2.1. The Diagnosis/ Predictive Test

By using this method, I wanted to identify the students' abilities of using preposition. I also wanted to analyse the way students were able to both acquire and produce a written message using preposition.

The test was written according to the syllabus and contained 3 exercises referring to the students' abilities of using the preposition.

By using this test the teacher was able to evaluate both acquiring and producing messages regarding the preposition.

The first exercise, **exercise I**, contains an extract with different prepositions (expressing place, time, cause, adjectives followed by prepositions, and prepositional phrases etc). The students have to identify the prepositions by underlining them.

By using this type of exercise I wanted to find the students' abilities of acquiring a written message and their abilities of identifying the prepositions in different contexts.

The second exercise, **exercise II** contains 10 sentences. The students have to choose the suitable preposition among the given ones to fill in the gaps.

By using this type of exercise I wanted to find the students' abilities of producing a written message and using the proper preposition among the given ones.

The third exercise, **exercise III**, also contains 10 sentences. The students have to fill in the gaps with the suitable preposition, but this time without having given any prepositions to choose from.

By using this type of exercise I wanted to find the students' abilities of producing a written message and filling the gaps with the proper preposition.

The duration of the test is of 25 minutes. For every exercise solved correctly the students obtain 10 points multiplied by 3 exercises was 90 points and the other 10 points ex officio. The total score was 100 points.

2.2 A possible model of pedagogical intervention

During the pedagogical intervention I have used some interactive methods such as:

2.2 1. Board games

Board games are an important tool to provide hands-on and heads-on skill and knowledge development for people of all ages on all subjects. Not only do well-designed games create an engaging atmosphere, they also provide a nonthreatening, playful, yet competitive environment in which to focus on content and reinforce and apply learning. Mistakes are useful and point out what we need to learn. **(Treher, 2011:3-4)**

Many board games encourage players to:

- detect patterns;
- plan ahead;
- predict the outcome of alternative moves;
- learn from experience
- task performance can be assessed in terms of the outcome **(Skehan, 1998, p. 95)**.

While having taught prepositions I realised that this type of activity turned to be very effective and challenging.

Next I am going to describe this activity from different points of view as presented in the lesson plans in the next subchapter.

Aim: the development of the ability of producing an oral message;

Competence/ objective: to practice preposition of place;

Task: make up sentences according to the picture using the preposition of place;

Procedures:

- Teacher divides the class into groups;
- T provides students with the material resources : board games, counters and dice;
- Students choose a counter and in turns roll the dice and go forward. When they land on a square they have to make up sentences according to the picture using the preposition of place. If the answer is correct they move ahead two more spaces.

Resources: Ss, board game, counters, dice.

Interaction: GW (group work)

Time: 15-20'

Feedback: Ss say the sentences.

2.2.2. Playing cards

Role play cards can be a very useful tool. Role-play cards invite students to assume the role of a specific person or character and to react to a stimulus or prompt as that person.

The teacher first models language structures and builds vocabulary that students will need. English language learners will need to be given rehearsal time and a speaking frame. After the activity it is important to build in reflection time.

Role playing allows people to make mistakes in a nonthreatening environment. They can test several solutions to very realistic problems, and the application is immediate. It also fulfils some of the very basic principles of the teaching-learning process such as learner involvement and intrinsic motivation. A positive climate often results in which one can see himself as others see him. The involvement of the role playing participants can create both an emotional and intellectual attachment to the subject matter at hand. Role playing can often create a sense of community within the class.

(Richards, 1986)

The benefits of role-play cards:

- A tool for giving English language learners opportunities to use language and content in a variety of situations.
- Can be used in subject areas to link learning to real life contexts

This type of activity was very productive and fun during my classes. The students' participation was also very active.

Next I am going to describe this activity from different points of view :

Aim:

- the development of the ability of acquiring an oral message;
- the development of the ability of producing an oral message

Competence/ objective:

- to practice preposition;
- to reinforce the use of prepositions.

Task: Create a Prepositional Phrase

Procedures:

- Teacher divides the class into groups;
- T provides students with the material resources : cards worksheets, scissors;
- Students cut out the cards and shuffle each stake of red and blue cards separately;
- Students put a red preposition card with a blue object card and form sentences.

Resources: Ss, cards worksheets, scissors, sheets of paper, pens, whiteboard.

Interraction: GW (group work)

Time: 15-20'

Feedback: one student from every group comes to the board and writes some sentences they have formed using the prepositional phrases.

3.Bingo

Bingo is one of my favourite games to play in my English classes.

It is versatile, simple, and fun. I have played many different versions of Bingo depending on what I happen to be teaching, and Bingo is flexible enough that I can use it with about anything.

Many teachers improve the game by using words instead of numbers. Preparing Bingo cards takes a little time, but we can easily reuse the game in future classes, so it's worth it.

Before starting the game, it is necessary to prepare the students by practicing sentences or vocabulary. We could also call up two students to model asking and answering one question. We also must give clear instructions before students begin.

In my opinion, the most important features and benefits of this technique are:

- it refers to learner self-assessment;
- it is learner-centred;
- detect patterns;
- learn from experience.

Next I am going to describe this activity from different points of view.

Aim:

- the development of the ability of acquiring an oral message;
- the development of the ability of producing an oral message

Competence/ objective:

- to practice preposition;
- to review the prepositions and prepositional phrases.

Task:combine the two structures to create prepositional phrases, and/or build sentence with the prepositional phrases.

Procedures:

- Teacher divides the class into pairs;
- T provides students with the material resources : bingo cards;
- In pairs, students listen to the structure that teacher says and cross out the preposition on the bingo card that matches to form correct prepositional phrases.

- One of the students writes on the paper or notebook the prepositional phrase.
- When a pair has crossed out all the prepositions in a line, they shout LINE and the game continues to bingo;
- When a pair has crossed out all the prepositions on the bingo card, they shout BINGO

Resources: Ss, bingo cards, sheets of paper, pens, whiteboard.

Interraction: PW (pair work)

Time: 20-25'

Feedback: one student from every pair comes to the board and writes some prepositional phrases or sentences they have formed using the prepositional phrases.

4. Teaching preposition through music and videos

Music is a very effective tool that should play a larger role in the ESL classroom because it offers a great variety those appeals to the students. Most children enjoy music and therefore it should increase their interest in learning a new language in a very entertaining way.

Teachers need to be willing to incorporate music in their lessons in order to better enhance their students' learning.

Music can be used to remove language barriers and should be implemented as early as possible. More music in every language classroom will inspire more students to become creative and independent. Music will allow teachers and their students to understand each other and connect in a new way.

“How is it that for most people music is a powerful part of their personal life and yet when we go to work or school we turn it off?” (**Brewer, 1995:2**).

My opinion is that music in the classroom fits perfectly and I know that music and songs is an effective tool for teachers to use for their students as I have used a lot of music and videos while teaching. Nowadays teenagers are very fond of music of all kinds. Knowing that music is their main interest I took advantage of it and used it into my English classes.

The classes were very funny and while teaching new structures and patterns we hummed, sang and nodded our heads. The classes and activities were very productive and the students were very interested in them.

The benefits of teaching new language through music and videos are:

- It is entertaining and fun;
- Students are more interested and more active and efficient;
- To practice structure through music.

Next I am going to describe this activity from different points of view.

Aim:

- the development of the ability of acquiring an oral message;
- the development of the ability of producing a written message.

Competence/ objective:

- to practice preposition and prepositional phrases;
- to complete the gaps with the suitable prepositions.

Task: Fill in the gaps and finish the song:

Procedures:

- Teacher divides students into pairs;
- Teacher hands out the worksheets;
- First students try to complete the gaps with prepositions of their own;
- Then teacher plays the CD for the students to check.

Resources: Ss, worksheets, pens, CD/ mp3 player/ computer, projector.

Interraction: PW (pair work)

Time: 15-20'

Feedback: students sing/read the song on the worksheet.

2.3. The Final/ Summative Assessment Test

By using this method, I wanted to check the students in the experimental class abilities of using preposition after having taught by combining the traditional methods with the modern ones. I also wanted to analyse the control class students' scores after being taught using only the traditional methods. In the end I made a comparison analysis between the results of the two classes experimental and control class.

The test was also written according to the syllabus and contained 3 exercises. The skills tested here are building vocabulary, prepositional phrases, prepositions and writing complex sentences.

By using this test the teacher was able to check the students' progress of both acquiring and producing messages regarding the preposition.

First exercise, **exercise I**, the students have to combine the prepositions with the phrases so that they should form the correct prepositional phrases.

The second exercise, **exercise II**, the students have to fill the text with the suitable prepositional phrases they have formed in the previous exercise.

The third exercise, **exercise III**, the students have to make sentences of their own with the prepositional phrases they have already used in the previous exercises.

The duration of the test is of 40 minutes. For every exercise solved correctly the students obtain 10 points multiplied by 3 exercises was 90 points and the other 10 points ex officio. The total score was 100 points.

3. Description and justification of the statistical techniques

After I found the students' scoring at the predictive test I centralised the data and wrote them in the table below.

Table 1 contains data regarding the experimental class' names abbreviations, the scoring at the predictive test and the grade point average.

Table 1

No.	Students' names	Scoring
1	B.D.	4.20
2	B.V.	6.70
3	C.F.	4.40
4	C.A.	4.00
5	Cs.I.	5.10
6	D.I.	7.90
7	F.D.	3.80
8	G.D.	3.90
9	Gh.V.	4.70
10	I.G.	5.30
11	L.C.	6.20
12	P.E.	3.00
13	P.M.	7.50
14	P.C.	5.50
15	S.I.	3.00
16	T.M.	6.60
17	V.C.	2.90
Grade point average:		4.98

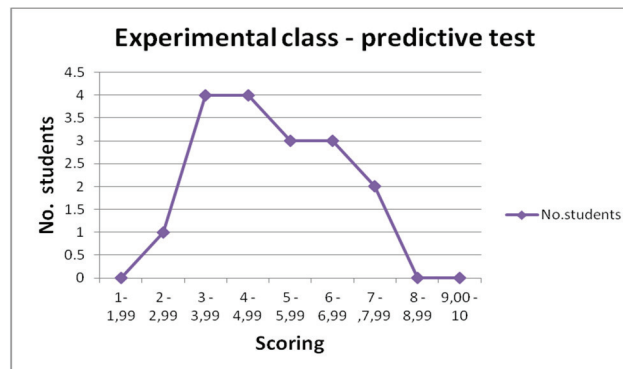


Diagram 1 represents the experimental class' predictive test graphic, the number of students that had the same scoring.

Table 2 contains the scoring for the experimental class, number of students that had the same scoring, percentage, and the grade point average.

Scoring	1 - 1.99	2 - 2.99	3 - 3.99	4 - 4.99	5 - 5.99	6 - 6.99	7 - 7.99	8 - 8.99	9-10	Grade point average
No. Of students	0	1	4	4	3	3	2	0	0	4.98
Percentage		5.88%	23.53%	23.53%	17.65%	17.65%	11.76%			

Diagram 2

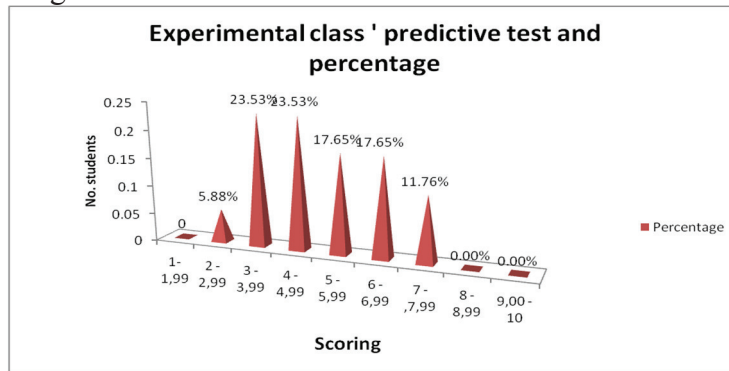


Diagram 2 represents the scoring for the experimental class, number of students that had the same scoring and percentage for the predictive test.

Table 3 represents contains data regarding the control class' names abbreviations, the scoring at the predictive test and the grade point average.

No.	Students' names	Scoring
1	B.D.	4.10
2	B.I.	6.70
3	C.C.	4.40
4	C.O.	4.10
5	D.C.	5.00
6	H.V.	7.20
7	I.N.	3.80
8	J.A.	3.90
9	M.C.	5.00
10	M.L.	5.30
11	M.G.	6.20
12	P.G.	3.20
13	R.I.	6.90
14	R.F.	5.50

15	S.A.	3.10
16	S.S.	6.70
17	S.M.	3.00
Grade point average:		4.95

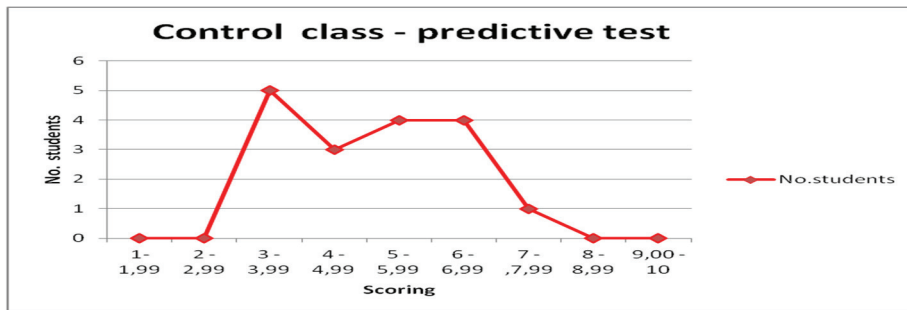


Diagram 3 represents the control class' predictive test graphic, the number of students that had the same scoring.

Table 4 contains the scoring for the control class, number of students that had the same scoring, percentage, and the grade point average.

scoring	1 -1,99	2 -2,99	3 -3,99	4 -4,99	5 -5,99	6 -6,99	7 -7,99	8 -8,99	9 -9,00	10	Grade point average
No. Of students	0	0	5	3	4	4	1	0	0	0	4.95
Percentage			29.41%	17.65%	23.53%	23.53%	5.88%				

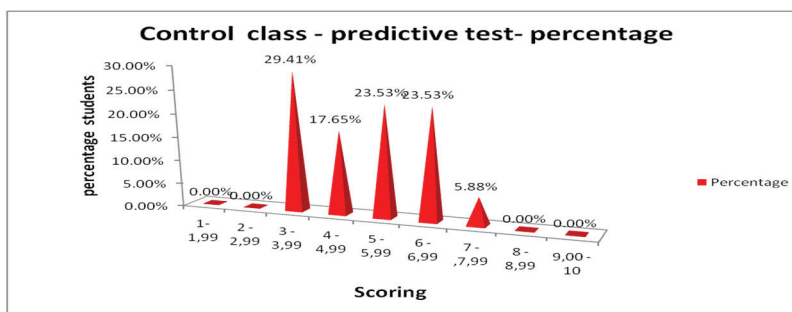


Diagram 4 represents the scoring for the control class, number of students that had the same scoring and percentage for the predictive test.

Table 5 contains the two classes with the total number of students in each class, scoring and percentage for the predictive test.

CLASS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	SCORING																		
		1-1,99	2-1,99	3-2,99	4-2,99	5-3,99	6-3,99	7-4,99	8-4,99	9-5,99	10-5,99	11-6,99	12-6,99	13-7,99	14-7,99	15-8,99	16-8,99	17-10	18-10	
experimental	7	0	-	1	5,9	4	23,5	4	23,5	3	17,7	3	17,7	2	11,8	0	-	0	-	
control	7	0	-	0	-	5	29,4	3	17,7	4	23,5	4	23,5	1	5,8	8	0	-	0	-

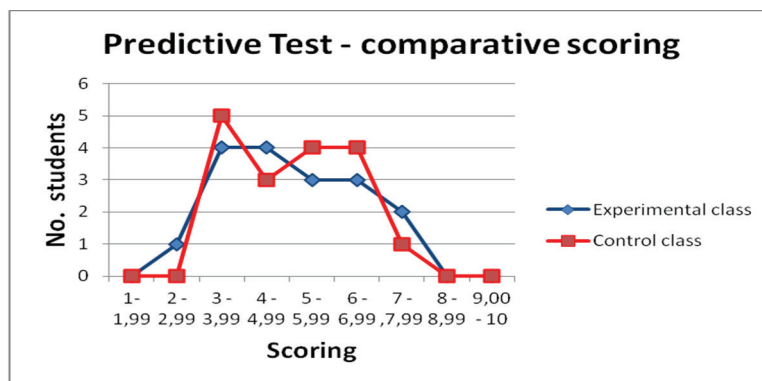


Diagram 5 represents the comparative analysis of scoring and the number of students with the same scoring of both experimental and control class of the predictive test.

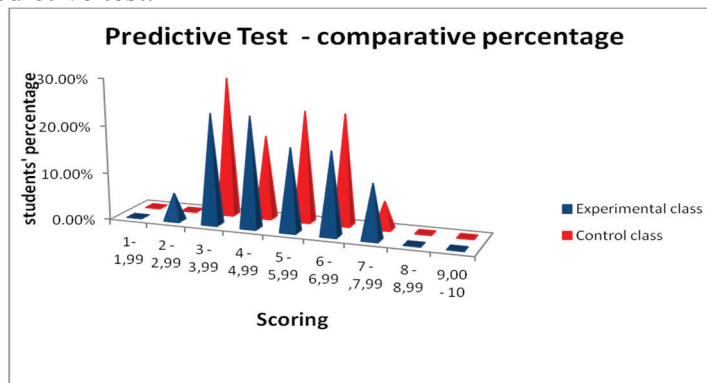


Diagram 6 represents the comparative scoring and percentage of both classes of the predictive test.

We can obviously notice that according to the tables and diagrams the two classes involved into the experimental research have equal chances even if there are some slightly differences.

According to the results analysis I wanted to highlight the fact that few students were able to identify the preposition, in all its forms, and to produce

a message using the preposition. Preposition, as part of the syllabus content for the 10th grade, was not mastered well by the students in both classes. They made many mistakes and confusions regarding prepositions and if they did recognise them and use them properly, it was by chance or because of the fact that the prepositions matched with those in their mother tongue.

I also noticed that firstly, they had translated the text into their mother tongue, then into English and after that they had rewritten the text completely into English using the requested prepositions, which they had assumed were used properly.

They were students studying in a technological and vocational school. They used to have poor abilities of using English either in receiving or producing a message. They used to have a strategy, which was understandable in a way and specific to young people learning a second language.

Firstly, when they received a task to solve, they tried to translate it into their mother tongue.

Secondly, they tried to solve the task into their mother tongue.

Finally the students translated the final answer of the task into English giving the final solution of the task.

They used to translate every single word or, if the worst came to the worst, they used translating motors on the internet. If they looked up every word in the dictionary it would not be so bad because they might have found some other meanings and usage of the words and so might have found the proper version. But having used a translating motor for the task, they might not have been given different meanings and contexts.

This is the primary problem with second language learners that I have encountered very often during my teaching career.

Now I am going to present the procedure for the pedagogical research.

At first I chose two classes of the same level for the experiment: a control class and an experimental test.

Then I provided both classes with the same predictive test, which we can find in the previous chapter.

After finding the results of the predictive test I started the experiment as follows: during the entire school year, I used only traditional methods for the control class, while teaching the students and I combined the traditional methods with the modern ones for the experimental class to develop, vary and activate the abilities of using the prepositions both in acquiring and producing messages process.

Finally at the end of the school year I provided both classes the final test.

The results were very different from the ones in the predictive test. They were not only more different but, the experimental class' results were higher.

What is more, the active and participative methods made the students to get more involved in the activities used in the class. Participating actively at the English class the students acquired the new knowledge easier.

To conclude with, I noticed that the modern methods stimulated the students' creativity, initiative, having an important role in developing their personality. By using these methods, the students were encouraged to express their feelings freely, and they were stimulated to get involved in the activities at the class. Having participated actively at the teaching- learning activities, the students acquired the new notions easier, developed their vocabulary, and the abilities of acquiring and producing oral and written messages.

The students' results at the final test are centralised in the tables and diagrams below:

Table 6 contains data regarding the experimental class' names abbreviations, the scoring at the final test and the grade point average.

No.	Students' names	Scoring
1	B.D.	6.20
2	B.V.	7.80
3	C.F.	6.30
4	C.A.	5.80
5	Cs.I.	6.90
6	D.I.	9.10
7	F.D.	5.30
8	G.D.	5.10
9	Gh.V.	6.00
10	I.G.	6.80
11	L.C.	7.50
12	P.E.	5.10
13	P.M.	8.30
14	P.C.	6.80
15	S.I.	4.90
16	T.M.	7.80
17	V.C.	4.20
Grade point average:		6.46

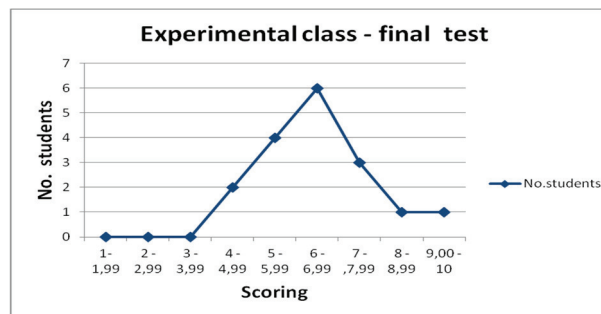


Diagram 7 represents the experimental class' final test graphic, the number of students that had the same scoring.

Table 7 represents the experimental class results, number of students that had the same scoring, and percentage.

Scoring	1 - 1.99	2 - 2.99	3 - 3.99	4 - 4.99	5 - 5.99	6 - 6.99	7 - 7.99	8 8- 8.99	9 -10	Grade point average:
No. students	0	0	0	2	4	6	3	1	1	6.46
Percentage				1 1.76 %	2 3.53 %	3 5.29 %	1 7.65 %	5. 88%	5 .88%	

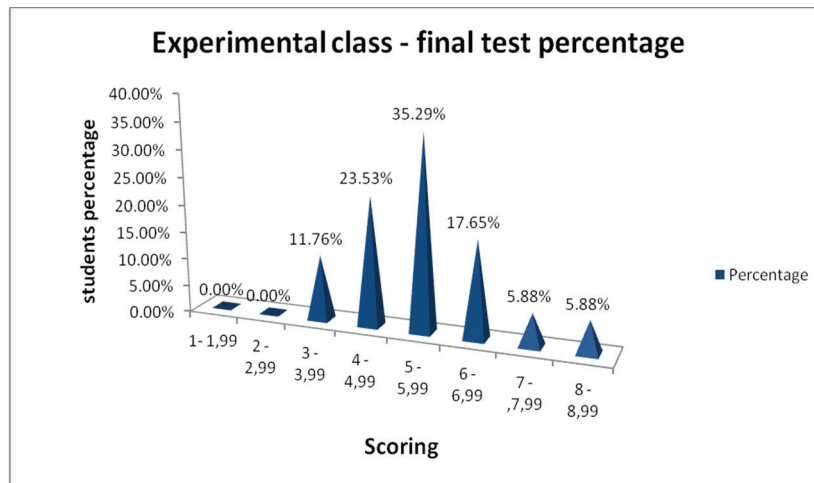


Diagram 8 represents the graphic for the experimental class' number of students with the same scoring and percentage for the final test

Table 8 represents the control class' names and abbreviations, scoring, and the grade point average at the final test.

No.	Students' names	Scoring
1	B.D.	5.40
2	B.I.	6.90
3	C.C.	5.60
4	C.O.	4.90
5	D.C.	5.90
6	H.V.	7.80

7	I.N.	4.70
8	J.A.	4.90
9	M.C.	5.70
10	M.L.	5.90
11	M.G.	6.80
12	P.G.	4.50
13	R.I.	7.20
14	R.F.	6.30
15	S.A.	3.90
16	S.S.	6.90
17	S.M.	3.90
Grade point average:		5.72

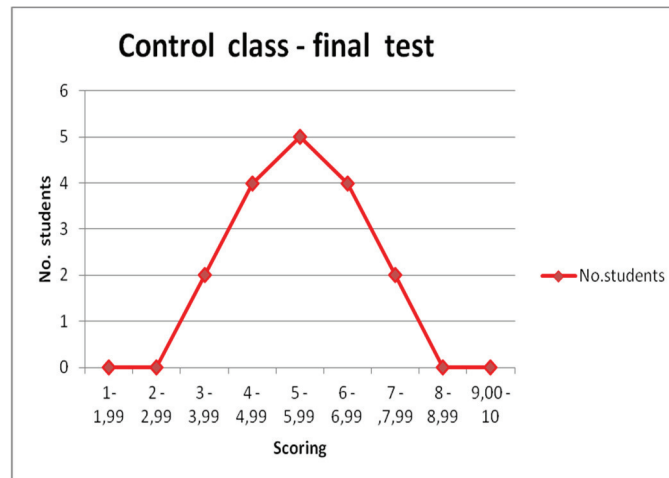


Diagram 9 represents the control class' number of students with the same scoring for the final test.

Table 9 represents the control class number of students with the same results, scoring, Grade point average and percentage for the final test.

Scoring	1 - 1.99	2 - 2.99	3 - 3.99	4 - 4.99	5 - 5.99	6 - 6.99	7 - 7.99	8 - 8.99	9-10	Grade point average:
No students	0	0	2	4	5	4	2	0	0	5.72
Percentage			1.76%	3.53%	9.41%	3.53%	1.76%			

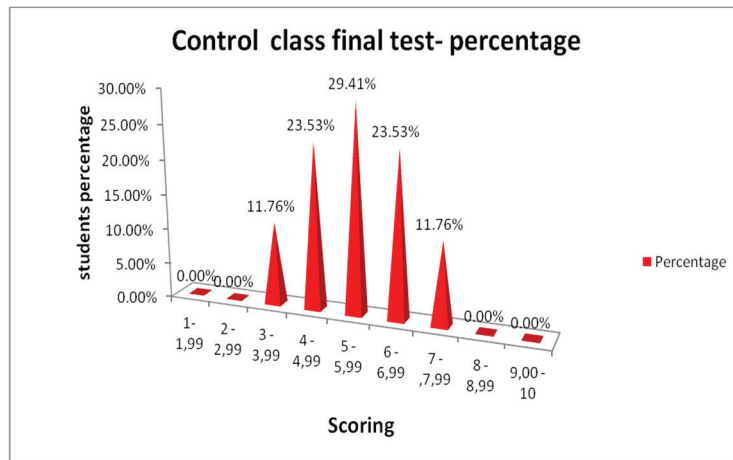


Diagram 10 represents the control class' number of students with the same result, scoring and percentage for the final test.

The final test comparative results for both control and experimental classes are:

Table10 represents the final test results of both control and experimental classes. There are the number of students in each class, the number of students with the same results , taken separately, and the percentage.

	R ADE	o. Stu dents	SCORING									
			1 - 1,99	2 - 2,99	3 - 3,99	4 - 4,99	5 - 5,99	6 - 6,99	7 - 7,99	8 - 8,99	9-10	
Experimental	7	-	-	-	-	1. 76	3. 53	5. 29	7. 65	.8 8	.8 8	
Control	7	-	-	1. 76	3. 53	9. 41	3. 53	1. 76	-	-		

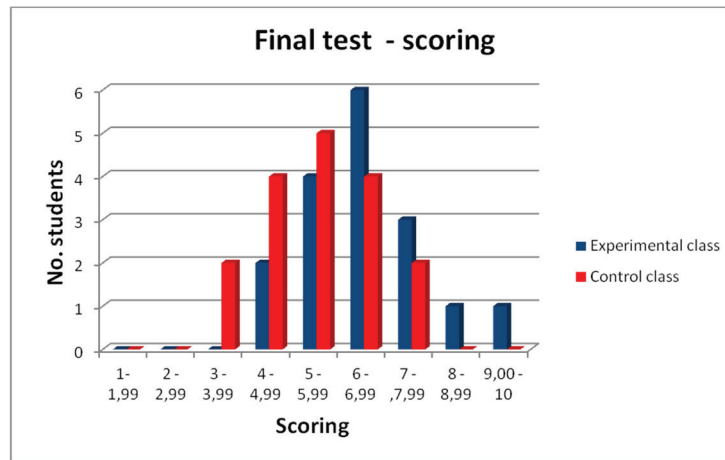
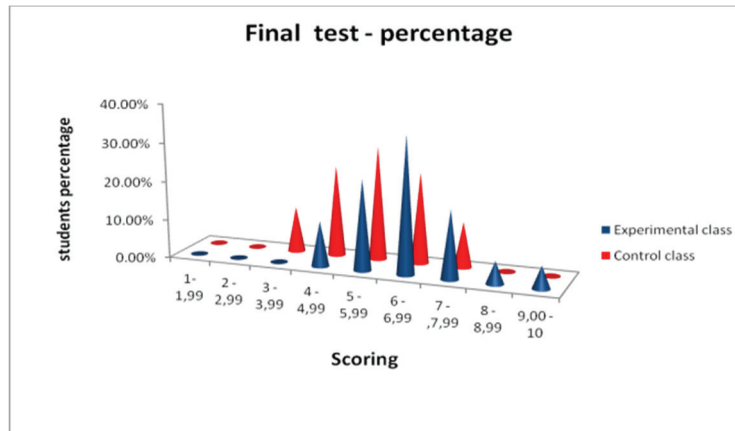


Diagram 11 represents the two classes' final test comparative scoring. There is the number of students with the same results.

Diagram 12 represents the two classes the final test comparative scoring and percentage.



There is to be noticed some differences concerning the two tests, predictive and final test, taken by both experimental class and control class. If at the predictive test taken by the two classes, the scoring was roughly equal, concerning the final test, there are some major differences between both experimental and control class.

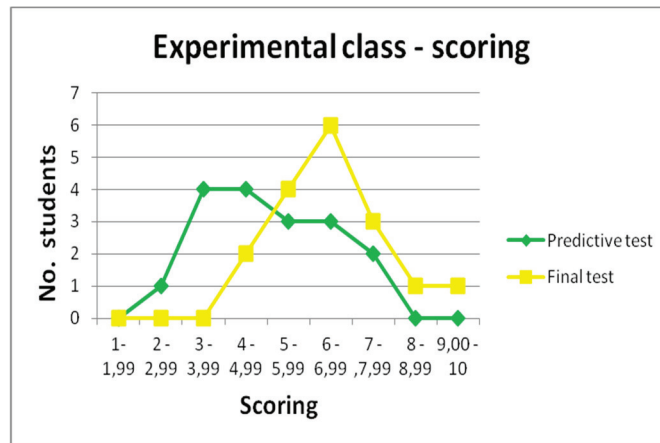


Diagram 13 represents the experimental class scoring for the two tests, number of students with the same result.

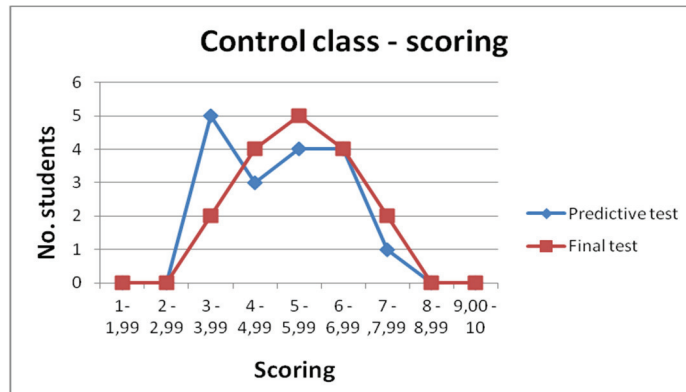


Diagram 14 represents the control class scoring for the two tests, number of students with the same result.

After processing the data statistics and the qualitative analysis, we can easily notice that compared to the control class, by the end of the final test, the students in the experimental class, have made important progress regarding the use of preposition.

This was possible following the modern methods blended with the traditional ones used in the activities during the English classes.

Therefore, in the experimental class, the number of the students who had passed the test, raised. The percentage increased from 47.06% to 88.24%.

In the control class the percentage of the students who had passed the test also raised from 52.94% to 64.70%. The raise in this case was not so high. Having used only the traditional methods with the control class, the process of acquisition of new knowledge was not so productive.

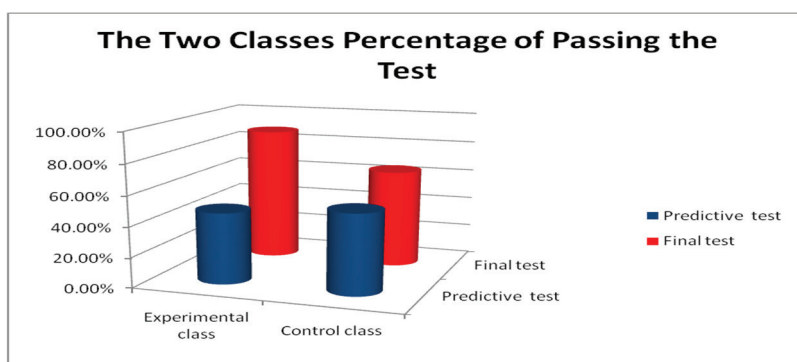


Diagram 15 represents the classes' percentage of passing the tests.

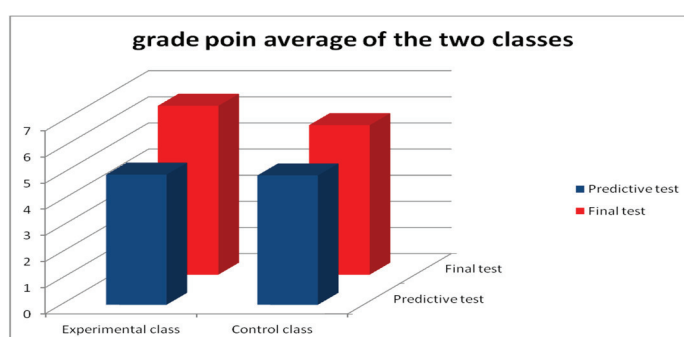


Diagram 16 represents the two classes' grades point averages for both predictive and final tests.

There are many important factors to take into account and which led to developing and activating the abilities of using the prepositions and enriching their vocabulary. The factors that were taken into account for the productive results at the end of the pedagogical research were:

- the modern methods applied during the classes blended with the traditional ones;
- the students' age and individual particularities;
- the class content in accordance with the method's didactical task.

The results of the final tests were to be expected, and I refer to the experimental class. During the entire experiment period I had encountered some difficulties too. The control class, where I used only the traditional methods, sometimes got bored while looking up in the dictionaries for new words, reading the long extracts of texts, or solving grammar exercises.

The experimental class, where I had used both the traditional and modern methods, was pleased and sometimes excited about the activities and procedures I used. They had fun and sometimes they disturb the classes. This fact sometimes, led to not doing all the objectives proposed for that class.

Another difficulty was the fact that the activities were, as they said, too childish. For example there was a board game activity with counters and dice. Some of them even refused to play the games for that activity.

The required measures following the results analysis would be:

- to propose less objectives for the lessons;
- to adapt the modern activities and methods to their age and interests;
- to use both traditional and modern methods with all classes;
- to take into account their preferences , hobbies and interests.

As a closing remark for this pedagogical research and experiment that I had proposed to make is that the two classes that had been chosen for this experiment were willing to participate in this experiment. The tests were reliable and in accordance with the syllabus and the curriculum for English classes of tenth grade for technological classes. The validity of the interpretation of the results and the statistics were accurate, likely to be true and correct.

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