

A Training Scheme for College Communicative Teaching

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Abstract - This study sought to design and try out a training scheme for college teachers on communicative teaching. Based on needs analysis, the teachers of English were reoriented so that they will be equipped with the rationale, strategies and assessment techniques of communicative language teaching through the six learning segments which were revised and finalized after a three-day try out. The researcher used five stages in the model to undertake the study. Specifically, the study determined: (1) the stages in the development of the training scheme and (2) the contents of the training scheme's learning segments as a product of the research. The scheme produced in this research ensures that teachers will incorporate tasks involving communication such as requiring students to do something in the lesson, with the language, or with each other. Developing students' oral and written communication skills is one of the most important goals in language teaching. These skills are essential for interactive survival in a global setting. With the use of communicative teaching techniques that are contained in the learning segments of the training scheme, these professors can provide interaction that will be meaningful, interactive, and responsive to the

learners' needs as they teach minor English courses.

Keywords - communicative teaching, college teachers, training scheme

INTRODUCTION

Song Seng (1997) states that teacher competence is an essential factor for achieving educational excellence. To ensure that teachers are accountable and knowledgeable about the subject they teach, emphasis has been placed on professional training of new educational systems' designs. Teachers, as the key component of an educational system, need professional training to assure efficiency of students' learning. Thus, educational systems should be driven by the need to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and equity. This highlights the importance of training on-the-job teachers.

For a teacher to develop his competence, the primacy of the classroom is indeed high. It is in that learning environment where she/he becomes the principal agent of change. It is where her/his experience is based and where growth will take effect (Wajnryb, 1992). Considering the importance of the classroom in a teaching-learning process, this research focused on looking at students in their English classes to see how their teachers develop their communicative competence. Developing students' communication skills is vital for them to become professionals, Danao (2002) says. She explains in her book, *Confluence: Journeys* that students need to learn the body of material for the profession they are preparing for. This body of material in the different disciplines is in English. Most importantly, students need to know how to communicate in English since it is an international language, and one of the official languages of the Philippines and of Philippine education. Thus, the English subjects in college must equip students to become the professionals they want to be, Danao concludes.

English teachers then must try to hold on against the rapid wearing down of the position of English in the Philippines. Eugenio (1999) suggests that the line can best be defended at the level of the teaching

of English in college. Many strategies come and go but these are not appreciated because teachers have not redirected their traditional teaching style. For this reason, the researcher developed the training scheme. This training scheme is composed of segments that are designed for English teachers to maximize learners' communicative potentials. Bartlett (1990) supports this idea for he believes that the process of learning is an active, not a passive one. Active learning, one that involve students in classroom communicative tasks, allows learning to be both more personal and more memorable and for these reasons, is more effective. Learners who are engaged by the lesson – by the teacher, the materials, the tasks, and the activities – are more likely to have that learning make an impact on them.

Generally, this research aimed to reorient teachers' perspectives in teaching English in which a training scheme for College English teachers was designed so that in their English classes, they will develop students' communication skills. This is supported by Krum (1993) as he strongly points out that 'If the teaching goal of modern language teaching is the students' ability to communicate, then it holds especially true that the teacher should hold himself back in favor of the student.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study determined the different stages which compose the development of the training scheme for college communicative teaching, and to identify the different contents of the learning segments for communicative teaching.

FRAMEWORK

Recent data confirm the significant role of teacher training providing differentiated instruction for various types of learners (Hansen and Feldhusen, 1994; Tom Liason et. al., 1994). Students have varied competencies so the teaching strategies that will be used in class must match their potentials. Thus there is every reason to place students with teachers who have received training. The benefits that learners get from these trained teachers become greater.

Pica and Long (1996) revealed in a classroom observation research that teachers tend to do most of the talking. They also found that

teachers tend to talk for about two-thirds of the available class time, leaving just a third for learners. Also, in some language classrooms, it has been shown that teachers talk for up to eighty nine percent of the available time. These cases leave very little room for students to communicate which defeats the purpose of language teaching. Hence, a training scheme to reorient English teachers' perspectives towards communicative teaching was designed.

Various theories and concepts aided the researcher in the production of the training scheme for college English teachers. The said training situated a scheme composed of learning segments so planned as to result in communicative teaching.

This research utilized concepts from the theory of Johns (1997), which is the Eight Steps to Planning an Effective Training Event. The first step in Johns' model is the design of a training which defines the purpose of the training and target audience. This is followed by determining participants' needs intended to create a meaningful training event for the participants. After assessing the needs and expectations of the participants, John goes on to say that defining training goals and objectives will help clarify expected outcomes. With the goals and objectives set, training content can be outlined. This serves as the fourth step in her model which she divides into three key segments: an introduction, a learning component and a wrap up and evaluation component. The introduction serves to reduce anxiety of participants while the learning component as body of the program serves to accomplish the training objectives. The wrap up and evaluation will help bridge the gap between training and implementation to summarize central concepts and themes.

Step five of Johns' model offers detailed information about designing and organizing learning activities so that outcomes identified by the objectives will be achieved. The next step involves creating a written document that provides a detailed plan of the training session including training goals and objectives. This is to prepare a written training design. Step seven is described as preparing participant evaluation forms to determine the extent to which the training achieved its objectives and to identify adjustments to be made in the training design. Without follow up activities which is step eight of the model, the benefits of training may quickly be forgotten or never used. This

step provides the continued support and feedback necessary for the successful implementation of new ideas and practices.

The researcher also based the key concepts of her research framework on the Systematic Approach to Training (SAT) which is similar to Seels and Glasgow's Instructional System Design Model (ISD). These models begin with Analysis. As the first phase, it rationalizes the necessity for the training. This phase can be likened to steps 1 and 2 of John's model. Next is the Design phase referred to as the decision-making phase. Also similar to steps 3 and 4 of John's model, this phase will complete three important activities: (1) deciding what participants will learn, (2) what will be taught and (3) the instructional methods to be used and what competency will be required from the participants. In the Development phase, the training concept is made into a material in the form of the training design with different parts. This is step 5 of John's model, of developing instructional activities. Both models refer to the Implementation phase as the "actual training". This is where the developed training design will be put into a realistic context. Step 6 of John's model also refers to this as the training scheme preparation and implementation. Evaluation is listed last in these models. It ensures that processes work well and improvements are identified right away. Step 8 of John's model, preparing evaluation forms and determining follow-up activities discusses this also.

By combining the different concepts of the three theorists cited above, the researcher came up with the research theoretical framework.

METHODOLOGY

The said training situated a scheme composed of learning segments so planned as to result in communicative teaching. In the world of teacher training, three models stand out. Based on these models, the researcher came up with her own Instructional Design model.

Basically, the modified Analysis, Design, Develop, Implementation and Evaluation (ADDIE) ladder which was named Needs Analysis, Plan Create, Try-out and assess was adopted in the creation of the scheme. Through this, the format was then designed. Trainers were invited to conduct the try out of the scheme on the respondents of this research. As to the assessment of the scheme, a set of evaluative

procedures was modified based on Scott and Parry’s evaluation scheme (1997).

The content presentation of each learning segment contains strategies that promote active learning. This includes: brainstorming, cooperative group work, simulation and mini-lectures. A detailed plan of the training sessions was used to stay on track during the training event. Mid-course corrections were also made and training details likewise documented through snapshots and the use of video tape recorder. Figure 1 illustrates in schematic form the theoretical components of this research as discussed below.

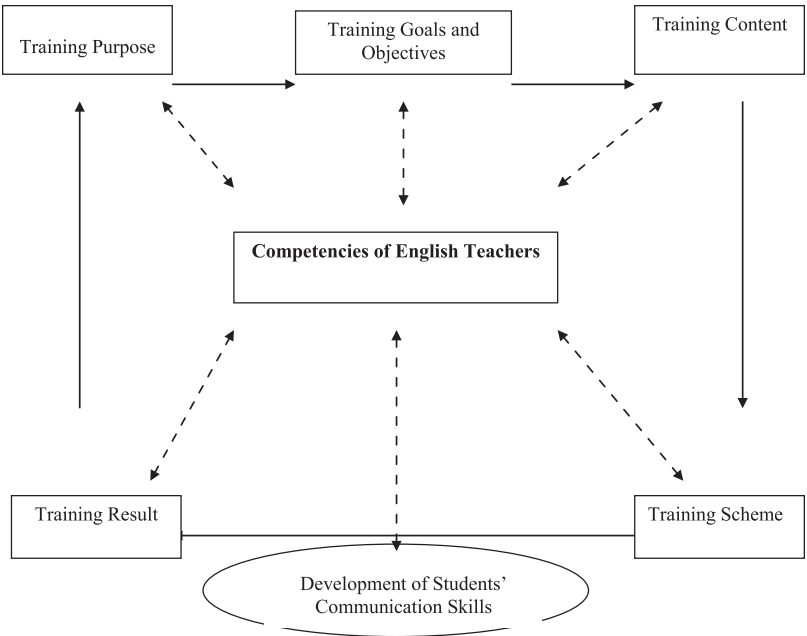


Fig.1 The theoretical framework of the research
(Adopted from Johns, SAT and ISD models)

Communicative teaching was the main concept of the training content. Gonzales (1998) claims that the reason why Filipino speakers of English have not mastered the English tense system with the

article system is that these systems have not been really understood and taught properly by teachers in the Philippines. This then is the need to reevaluate syllabi and teaching materials. If there is better programming of language materials and better training, then this can improve very well on the poor oral and written communication of college students.

Table 1 The trainers' assessment of the learning segments: a summary

ITEM	T 1	T2	T3
A. FORMAT			
1. General Appearance			
Is the material likely to appeal to the user's aesthetic sense?	5	5	3
2. Component			
Does the material contain many components that the trainees will have Difficulty keeping track of them?	3	2	
3. Quality			
Did the researcher use high quality materials in the production process?	5	5	4
4. Appropriateness of Illustrations			
Are the illustrations of the materials appropriate to the activities?	4	4	3
5. Readability of the Material			
Is the material readable?	4	5	4
B. ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT			
6. Approach			
Does the researcher use an approach consistent with the prescribed topic?	4	5	3
7. Instructional Objectives			
Are the objectives compatible with the ones prescribed in the segment title?	5	4	3
8. Scope and Sequence			
Is the scope and sequence of the material compatible with the time frame of the training?	4	4	3
9. Assessment Device			
Does the material contain tests and other assessment devices that will help the trainees?	4	4	4
10. Comprehensibility			
Will the material be clearly understood by the trainees and the trainer who will use it?	4	5	2
11. Coordination with the Segment Topics			

Is the learning segment compatible with the other materials used in the Training?	4	4	2
12. Individualization			
Does the design of the material allow trainers to use them differently according to trainees' needs?	3	4	2
13. Length			
Is the material's length appropriate?	3	5	4
14. Instructional Pattern			
Is the instructional pattern likely to excite the interest of the trainees?	4	4	2
15. Management System			
Does the trainer easily manage the use of the materials?	4	5	2
16. Role of the Trainees			
Does the material include interesting & rewarding activities?	4	4	3
Does the material include activities that the trainees are capable of doing?	4	4	2
Do they enjoy working with the material?	4	4	2

This need is given more importance by Arroyo (2003) in a newspaper column who mandated that teachers' competence in English be measured through a competency test. She further stressed that teaching competence be given importance so that quality graduates will be produced in the new millennium.

The teachers' continued learning is indeed fundamental to the health of the profession and thereby to the quality of education experienced by students in schools. If policy aims to effect permanent, meaningful change in the practice of education, this implies understanding of and commitment to that change by individual teachers. Otherwise, it will run the risk of critical superficiality, subtle resistance and misrepresentation. If real change is the aim, then teachers' engagement with their own learning is essential (Venville, 1998). Teaching competence as the target of the scheme cannot therefore be overemphasized.

The concept of communicative competence to reorient teachers' perspectives in language teaching was an important basis in the design of the training scheme. The arrows show the direction in the theoretical framework, with the development of communication skills of students situated outside of the framework. The last concept has an indirect relationship since the main concerns of the scheme are the teachers.

In the needs analysis stage, baseline data were obtained from the respondents through the use of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to gather the type of teaching strategies used in college English classes; the questionnaire for identifying the lesson objectives; the classroom observation which looked into the three parts of the lesson; and the analysis of the content of English tests.

Making use of the four extensive needs analysis procedures, the data were then analyzed. These were analyzed individually and entered in a matrix in the form of focus, rating and description. Final evaluation was derived through these three categories. The matrix showed commonality of results through simple frequency counts. Results served as basis for the production of the training scheme's learning segments.

There is a need to reorient English teachers' perspectives towards communicative teaching. The training scheme was designed to cater to this need. Its content outline appears as shown on the next page. Three experts then evaluated the designed training scheme composed of six learning segments. The table on the next page is a summary of the checklist for assessing the learning segments. The three respective trainers on a scale of 1-5 rated these. The scale is as follows: Very much – 5, Much – 4, Just enough – 3, Not much – 2, Not at all -1. Hence, the training scheme was refined on context of the stated results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the results of the study were gathered, the following relevant points were seen: The college English teachers reported that they developed students' communication skills through question and answer activities. These were predominantly observed in the initial stage of this research. Most teachers engaged the students in the lesson by letting them recite only when called. Students also did picture talk. This was seen as another technique used to encourage student talk. In this activity, students formulated sentences out of an exposed picture using the present progressive tense. To promote students' participation in class, the college English teachers used group dynamics. Belonging to a group, each student answers questions orally and earned points. They were not allowed to sit unless the question was answered. The

latter activity served as an evaluative measure in the class as observed. It also served as an oral exam.

The results of the needs analysis showed that teachers needed to develop competencies in communicative teaching. A training scheme needed to be designed for this purpose. Through the needs analysis, the following needed competencies of teachers were discovered. Firstly, teachers are required to value the affective side of language learning. These teachers believed that students perceive language learning negatively since they observed that students either felt uneasy or tensed when asked to speak English. Also, teachers believed that they could not be blamed for these students who use un-English utterances. When they come to college they are already made, a teacher commented. Moreover, teachers need an update on communicative teaching. The lecture method, one that is teacher-oriented was predominantly done in English classes. Very limited chances allowed for student talk. More importantly, teachers have to be exposed to the different strategies of communicative teaching. The Q and A technique was overused. If only they can observe a strategy that really works, they will certainly use it in class. This is one of the reasons why the training scheme was designed. Another avenue that teachers obviously need to acquire is to examine their course titles. By then, they will see what topics fit in the descriptive title of the course. There were several topics seen in the syllabus which twisted the idea given in the course title. English 1A for instance, a study and thinking skills course, focused solely on the parts of speech for its topics. Very common evaluative measure used to test students' skills was the paper and pencil test. Teachers are believed to be more creative than adopting just one mind-numbing strategy. Therefore, they need exposure in communicative testing and assessment. By then, not only quizzes and tests will occur in English classes.

To develop a training scheme for communicative teaching, the following stages were followed: Needs Analysis, Plan, Create, Try Out, and Assessment (NAPTCA) model. The analysis stage which made use of FGD, classroom observation, questionnaire and documentary evaluation of tests gave the researcher sufficient information on what competencies are needed by college English teachers to develop communication skills of students. The training scheme was then

designed based on the needed competencies of English teachers. The development stage of the scheme had for its baseline data the needs analysis. The scheme, in the form of segments, was then produced. Each segment contained a topic virtual to communicative teaching. Then, the implementation stage followed, actualized in the training of the college English teachers of Capitol University. The trainers who implemented the scheme were experts in the field of communicative teaching. Before the try out the trainers did a close examination of the segments. They took part in the development of the scheme since they brought materials for sample activities and valuable input. After the try out, the refinement of the scheme was done. This was based on the evaluation made by the trainers and trainees. During the training, the trainees evaluated the segments in the huddle sessions. The segment content and trainers' presentation of the learning segments were assessed. After the training, evaluation sheets were given to the participants of the training. They rated the totality of the scheme using the modified evaluation scheme of Scott and Parry (1997). The comments served as basis for the revision of the learning segments.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking the findings as strong points for evaluating this research, the following conclusions were drawn: Various opportunities for student-talk should be provided in English classes. This calls for teachers' creativity in designing meaningful and communicative tasks. After all, communication is but the goal of language instruction. Hence, the usual Q and A technique may not be overused, as there are other strategies to choose from.

The needs analysis showed that English teachers lack competencies. The activities provided in class did not encourage class interaction. They were the correct usage type if not rote memorizing of the rules of grammar. This therefore, made students more conscious to speak, as they had to think of the correct usage of verbs all the time. Some noted information did not actually happen in the classes observed. This shows that teachers were aware of the idea of communicative teaching but did not apply this in class.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following concepts are recommended as a result of the study:

1. An experimental research may be conducted to test the effectiveness of the developed training scheme. This may be compared to another scheme, which gives focus on the grammar approach to teaching English.
2. Teachers need to attend trainings with the design showing the apportioning of the topics per day, with the assessment and activities built into topics. Hence, a designer should detail a training scheme so that a trainee who uses it will just follow.
3. Trainings should be conducted on days other than Monday. There is such a thing as blue Monday. People will be late, still unprepared because of the weekend's activities.
4. Too long content of segments may bore the readers/trainees. As such the presentations of concepts have to be capsulated in various formats.

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