COMMUNICATIVE TEACHING IN THE TERTIARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

This paper developed a module for college English teachers. Communicative language teaching was the utilized strategy. The teacher-respondents were trained using the learning segments which were revised and finalized after a five-day try out.

Explicitly, the research determined: (1) the stages in the development of the training module and (2) the contents of the learning segments as research output.

The module composed of segments produced in this study ensured that teachers will incorporate tasks involving communication in the classroom. This involved 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 were considered essential in the training module which was developed in the study.

Research findings showed that the English professors of Capitol University and San Isidro College need to training with the current trends in language teaching. Further, the said training was deemed necessary to better achieve the goal of language teaching; that of developing students' oral and written communication skills.

Moreover, part of the modules produced by the researchers led these professors to reconstruct their own syllabuses to provide for a communicative class.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a second language is very challenging in the Philippines. Hence, English teachers should look for varied ways to respond to this challenge. To do this, college English teachers have to be prepared by updating themselves with the current trends in language teaching. Being well-informed with the latest developments in language teaching is a must for them. As posited by Long (2005), teachers' mastery of teaching the English language gives their students the skills needed to compete in the global marketplace.

Moreover, Cottrell (2003) states that teacher competence is an essential factor for achieving educational excellence. Truly, quality teaching leads students to learn better. Ellet, Loup, Culross, McMullen & Rugutt (2002), who conducted a study at Louisiana State University on "learning environments", found that student's self - reports of their learning and of their learning efficiency were significantly related to their personal perceptions of the learning environment. Student learning is enhanced in higher education settings that address students' personal learning environment needs and in which Quality Teaching thrives.

Students have different abilities when learning a second language. Some grasp concepts easily while others struggle and have difficulties leading to demotivation and lack of interest. Hence, to teach students successfully, teachers do not only educate, but also create a suitable environment for learners. Therefore it is necessary to perform many different roles in the classroom to fully achieve the best learning development (Keller, 2011). Teachers may do both of these: monitor students' language use; and facilitating communication.

A study of poor English language performance among student teachers in National University of Laos reveals that the cause of the poor performance is attributed to factors (Souriyavongsa et al., 2013) inclusive of the *lack of well-trained teachers, students' lack of English background knowledge* and *students' limited opportunity to use English with native English speakers.*

In a country like the Philippines, which aims to participate meaningfully in international affairs, English has a special place. And so has the English teacher who is called upon to define the role of the English language in national development.

However, it has long been known that teaching does not necessarily equal learning - that what a teacher does in the classroom to teach may not match what the learner perceives the lesson to be about. Crowe (2008) asserts that each lesson is a different lesson for every learner. The effect of what learners learn in every learning episode may vary, depending on how well they are motivated and how ready they are. Hence, teachers have a very important role to play in ensuring that students get the desired motivation scheme to achieve the goal of communicative teaching.

Davis (2003) states that the key to teaching students to think lies in how the teaching process is conducted. Teachers have the command to raise the level of students' thinking even to the extent of analysis and appreciation. Since students do not think this way naturally, interaction is necessary. High quality class interaction contributes significantly to a student's progress in developing his communication and verbal skills. This in turn will lead him to develop his thinking skills.

2. LITERATURE/ THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Strayhorn (2012) posits that teacher competence is essential for achieving educational excellence. To ensure that teachers are knowledgeable about the subject they teach, emphasis is placed on professional training. 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 competence, the primacy of the classroom is indeed high. In a learning environment, they become principal agents of change. It is where experience is based and where growth takes effect (Fraser, 2012). Considering the importance of the classroom in a teaching-learning process, this research focused on observing students in their English classes to find out how 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 (2009) 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 researchers developed the training module composed of learning segments; designed for English teachers to maximize learners' communicative potentials. Block (2002) supports the communicative teaching idea for he believes in the active process of learning; a scenario that involves 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.

3. METHODOLOGY

The Systems Approach to Training was used in this study to gather information from the college English classes of the two try out institutions. The Twenty five professors from Capitol University and Fifteen Instructors from San Isidro College were taken as respondents of this paper. Complete enumeration of samples was then employed. These respondents were intensely involved in the adopted five phases of the systems approach to training as follows; analyze, design, develop, implement, and evaluate.

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. The lesson objectives, strategy, content, evaluation, texts, textbooks and work texts as variables for the questionnaire; classroom observation and analysis of tests revealed a non-communicative language approach. The focus group discussion conducted among the forty respondents of the two try out institutes displayed a strong support for communicative language teaching. These results served as basis for the production of the training module's learning segments. Three experts then evaluated the designed training module composed of six learning segments. It was then refined in context with the stated results.

4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In gathering the results of the study, relevant points were seen. The analysis phase showed that the research respondents were purely using the traditional lecture method. Classroom observation results further showed very limited chances for student talk. Additionally, the Question and Answer technique was overused.

Furthermore, the needs assessment stage discovered that teachers needed to develop competencies in communicative teaching. The classroom activities they gave did not encourage class interaction. They ranged from the correct usage to rote memorizing of the grammar rules. This therefore, made students more conscious to speak, as they had to think of the correct usage of verbs all the time. Hence, the researchers thought of the necessity to develop the training module.

It is consequently concluded that various opportunities for student-talk should be provided among English classes. This calls for teachers' creativity in designing meaningful and communicative tasks. After all, communication is but the goal of language instruction.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that an experimental research be conducted to test the effectiveness of the developed training module. The existing module may be compared to another design, which can possibly give focus on the grammar approach to teaching English. Finally, more trainings may be tailored for teachers to enhance communicative teaching.

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