

# LANGUAGE TEACHER, TARGET LEARNER, AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS PREPARATION

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## **Introduction**

English, an elastic language, stretches and grows with time (Smith and Grisolia, 1994). It is the language that weaves the fabric of society in this information and push-button age. Used in all walks of life, English has become neutral and culture free: the language of modern science and technology. Innovations in the teaching and learning of the English language have attracted language experts and specialists to conduct researches and related studies on second language acquisition. Global attention as well is given to these innovations for all nations, developed or developing, depending upon the strength of their human resources for their well-being. Innovations, technology and plans for educational reforms need policies and social interventions to ensure success.

## **Language Teacher: A Key to the Learning Process**

Efficient and competent teachers who are committed to teach to make students learn and improve themselves are truly indispensable in a successful teaching-learning process. Quality teaching is determined by the kind of learners produced and the kind of success these learners have in the future as productive members of society.

The quality of education is directly dependent upon the competence and quality of its faculty. Their ability to teach and improve learning strengthens the standard of an educational institution.

Communication plays a great part in effective teaching. It is a purposeful human activity that brings about intelligent daily living (Napoli, 1996). The use of language has provided target learners realistic and stimulating learning environment by enabling them to encourage their own abilities and potentials that increase their self-confidence. Locsin (1993) stressed that responsible learning has

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to take place in schools to achieve dynamic and generative ends. This means that the students can handily adapt and use this knowledge in a variety of situations; knowledge that generates more knowledge; that both teachers and students are vulnerable, meaning they are open to the learning process, neither being ashamed nor afraid to explore new ways of learning.

Hence, language teachers must make "real" learning possible by blending theory and practice, maximizing their gaps by involving students in using and reusing the concepts presented in formal class, and having them concretized for better performance to gain personal satisfaction and success. Bearing in mind the current changes in the educational system and the thrusts of the institution, teachers must have prepared instructional materials in English to answer target learners' needs and make teaching efficient and effective.

### **Importance and Problems of Teaching English**

English, the medium of instruction (Sevilla, 1987) particularly in the tertiary level (Segovia, 1987) has contributed much to the learning of universal subjects, Mathematics and Science. It is used in intellectual pursuits and international affairs. It is the language of advancement and change.

The ability to communicate in English is definitely an asset. In a study conducted by Segovia (1987), English is perceived as the language for socio-economic mobility, educational advancement and international understanding. It gives graduates more chances of landing a job here and abroad, more opportunities for pursuing higher education, greater capacity for passing government examinations and facilitate better communication with foreigners and compatriots here and abroad.

The widespread deterioration of English skills and content area knowledge in the Philippine educational system is largely due to inadequate materials and poorly trained teachers (Tascher, 1992); lack of students motivation especially in public schools (Dalion, 1986, and Sevilla, 1987; Baloya, 1996; Barber, 1997), lack of instructional materials and school facilities (Gonzaga, 1996), lack of funds, low socioeconomic status (Sevilla, 1987) where students come from low income families whose homes are not only far from the school, but also devoid of instructional materials and where home tasks and errands compete with study (Dalion, 1986). They have very limited exposure and opportunities to use good English, and they lack teacher's attention to correct deficiencies, much more to have individualized remedial activities (Balquin, 1996).

## Target Learner and Instructional Materials (IMs) Preparation

Proficiency in the English language cannot be attained overnight. Aside from quality teachers who spend quality time with their learners, and learners who find interest in improving their linguistic and communicative skills, adequate quality instructional materials must be considered. Preparation is tedious and time consuming, and demands much of the writer's time, concentration and patience (Seroy, 1991) yet they have to be evaluated according to comprehensibility and acceptability (Robinson, 1971; Abordo, 1995), attraction, self-involvement and persuasion (Escalada, 1996).

IMs must be relevant, realistic, effective and useful to meet specific needs. As a channel of information or instructional aid, they broaden learners' perspectives on what they are being taught and enhance their interest and comprehension on the subject. Well-prepared programmed IMs (Gonzaga, 1996) which are considered comprehensible and acceptable teaching modules (Abordo, 1995) can reinforce varied classroom activities. Self-study, collective learning and action involve mobilization of human and material resources that strengthen technical competencies and sharpen teaching related skills.

Indeed, the teaching of English has put a strain on the teacher. The dilemma rests on what materials to use, where to get them, and how to use them in the classroom to operationalize and concretize teaching approaches and techniques in order to produce effective and efficient results gained from the teaching-learning activities. Short-term training programs, in-service trainings, echo seminar-workshops, teacher's initiative and resourcefulness in applying theory and practice in instructional materials development for language learners' can be of great help.

Taking into consideration the thrust of the institution and the learners' needs, the teacher must construct IMs that are geared towards improving the learners' linguistics and communicative competencies. The writer must rigorously and regularly look into the learners' strengths and weaknesses through their oral and written activities in the class, such as very poor background in English grammar and composition, particularly in content, form and application of the language and defective oral production of the English words. Noting their felt need, an IMs developer must apply careful and thoughtful planning in the inclusion and exclusion of some materials for reinforcement and enrichment. Revisions, addition of new and enriching items in some lessons are expected to happen. Moreover, these materials must be inexpensive so all language learners can avail

of them; and must be friendly, so they are encouraged to use them. Integration and practical use of the language in their college course also help them prepare for future employment, especially that learning the language does not end in the classroom. Its effects last a lifetime.

### **Concluding Statement**

Instructional materials preparation, like developing study guides, is practical, beneficial and necessary. It is better than the usual difficult process of searching for reference materials in the library (Tan, 1991). However, all IMs produced must pass through an in-house review – the institutional practice of obtaining opinions and reactions of experienced, respected colleagues at various stages in the production process (Escalada and Arcena, 1996), and a classroom survey using a questionnaire or a rating scale by which student opinions and observations are collected (Doyle, 1978). After IMs are evaluated for effectiveness, efficiency, acceptability, and generalizability (Jadloc, 1997), they are repackaged, improved, and updated to maximize students' use of time and resources through self-study with minimum teacher supervision; provide realistic varied activities that students find useful in their future careers, include reading materials that develop capacities for critical thinking, good study habits and work methods; maintain desirable social behavior and attitudes. Moreover, these IMs serve as communication lines that provide learners a wholesome and meaningful classroom atmosphere so that in their desire to improve their reading, listening, speaking and writing abilities, they can attain a certain level of English proficiency for a better preparation in life.

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