



A Training Plan for College English Teachers

K Marie D. Zambas¹ and Charito G. Ong²

¹ *University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines*

² *University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines*

ABSTRACT

This study generated a training plan for college teachers on communicative teaching. Needs assessment revealed that the English need to 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. Five stages in the modified Needs Analysis Plan Try out Create Assess (NAPTCA) model was utilized to undertake the study. Specifically, the study determined: (1) the stages in the development of the training design and (2) the contents of the learning segments as a research output. Furthermore, the needs analysis results showed that teachers needed to develop competencies in communicative teaching. Hence, the produced training design included areas for various opportunities of student-talk to be provided among English classes thus calling for teachers' creativity in designing meaningful and communicative tasks. Other topics were inclusive of teachers' exposure to communicative teaching.

Keywords: Training, Design, Communicative Language Teaching

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.

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 researchers developed the training design. This 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 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 design 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.* Hence, this study determined: (1.) What stages compose the development of the training design for college communicative teaching and (2.) What the contents of the learning segments for communicative teaching are.

Theoretical Framework

Recent data confirm the significant role of teacher training providing differentiated instruction for various types of learners (Hansen, 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 researchers in the production of the training design. The said training situated a scheme composed of learning segments so planned as to result in communicative teaching. Moreover, the paper 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, as the second step. 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. This is the third step. With the goals and objectives set, training content can be outlined. This serves as the fourth step in the model which the researchers divided 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 researchers also based the key concepts of the 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 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 Johns' model, preparing evaluation forms and determining follow-up activities discusses this also.

By combining the different concepts of the three theorists cited above, the researchers came up with the research theoretical framework shown below. Figure 1 illustrates in schematic form the theoretical components of this research.

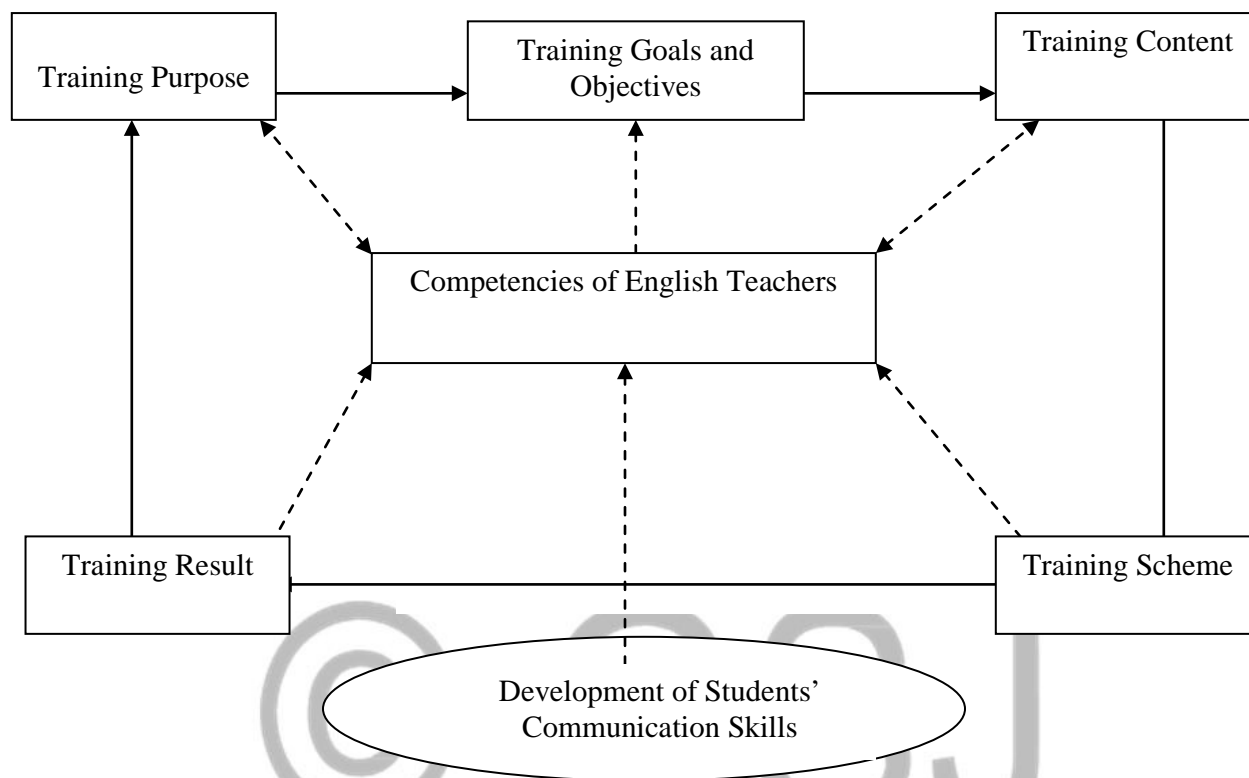


Figure 1: The theoretical framework of the research

The concept of communicative competence to reorient teachers' perspectives in language teaching was an important basis in the design of the training plan. 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.

Communicative teaching was the main concept of the training content produced by this paper. Gonzales (2000) 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.

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 design cannot therefore be overemphasized.

Methodology

This research was conducted in Cagayan de Oro City with the 55 College of Arts and Sciences faculty members of Capitol University (CU) and Mindanao Polytechnic State College (MPSC) during school year 2003-2004. Non-random Selective sampling was employed in choosing the research populace of the study with total enumeration for the data collection.

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 design. Through this, the format was then designed. Trainers were invited to conduct the tryout 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).

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.

To illustrate, the data gathered appeared in a matrix form as shown below.

Instrument	Variables Measured	Evaluative Description
FGD	Teaching Strategy	<i>Communicative</i>
Questionnaire	Lesson Objectives	<i>Non-CLT</i>
Class Observation	Strategy, Content, Evaluation	<i>Non-CLT</i>
Test Analysis	Tests, Textbooks, Work texts	<i>Non-CLT</i>

As shown in the matrix, 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.

Table 6 : Summary of the Trainers' Assessment of the Learning Segments

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
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

Hence, the training design was refined on context of the stated results.

Findings

After the results of the study were gathered, the following relevant points were seen.

1. Stages in the Development of the Training Design

To develop a training design 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 Focus Group Discussion, classroom observation, questionnaire and documentary evaluation of tests gave the researchers sufficient information on what competencies are needed by college English teachers to develop communication skills of students. The training design was fashioned based on the needed competencies of English teachers.

The results of the needs analysis showed that teachers needed to develop competencies in communicative teaching. Through this assessment stage, the 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 the essence of 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 Question and Answer technique was overused. If only they had observed strategies that really work, they would have used it in class. Another avenue that teachers obviously needed to acquire was to examine their course titles. By then, they would have seen 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. Moreover, very common evaluative measure used to test students' skills was the paper and pencil test. Teachers should 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.

The development stage of the training design had for its baseline data the needs analysis. The design, in the form of segments, was then produced. Each segment contained a topic virtual to communicative teaching. The content of the training design was composed of topics, content, mode of delivery, strategy and evaluative procedure. 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). Trainers were invited to conduct the tryout 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 comments served as basis for the revision of the learning segments. 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.

2. Contents of the Developed Learning Segments

The training design was composed of six segments. The researchers chose the term segment to refer to the packet of materials that the trainers used. These were arranged in a sequence. The first learning segment had to be finished before they moved on to the next segment. The segments are discussed as follows.

Knowledge on the affective side of language teaching and learning was the first topic set. FGD showed that students perceived negatively the use of English. The English teachers were unmindful of this. This was clearly manifested during the classroom observation as well. They were not keen in developing the verbal potential of students. They allowed the use of first language in class. They even sometimes switch to the first language in explaining relevant points. Therefore, there was a great need to develop teachers' competence in guiding students to reorient them in developing their communicative abilities.

Knowledge of communicative teaching followed. Needs analysis showed insufficient student interaction in English classes. There was maximum teacher talk and minimum learner talk. Those teachers may have been aware of the goal of language instruction as the result of the FDG and questionnaire showed yet, another thing happened in their classes. They certainly needed to update their teaching strategy to pave the way towards communicative teaching.

Awareness of the needed communication skills of college students was next. Teachers focused only on developing one area of students' skills, the linguistic side. The other skill areas were taken for granted. It is not enough for the learner to develop his linguistic competence as observed in the English classes. He must develop his skills in manipulating this linguistic system to the point where he can use it spontaneously and flexibly in order to express his intended message. Since what occurred in the classes observed were very few instances for learners to communicate, the latter was not realized.

Then, *How to revise syllabus for the designated course titles* subsequently came. Since work texts and lesson objectives did not necessarily promote communication skills of college students plus course descriptions do not fit the course syllabus, a topic on *a look at current course titles and meanings* need to be introduced. Hence, an application of communicative teaching strategies is needed to spotlight more on developing students' speaking potentials.

The *Need for communicative testing and assessment* was also included in the segment title. Tests made by English teachers disclosed minute opportunities for students to use the language spontaneously. Test tasks should reflect the attributes of the activity in real life that it was meant to replicate. Unlike the tests made, they talked about the tenses and other parts of speech. In the cloze test samples, the nth word deletion was not followed. They really needed training on this.

Lastly, *a packet of instruction* was prepared for the trainer. The trainer in conducting the training design will use this, as this will direct him/her on what to do in every training session. However, the design was designed for flexibility in that any trainer may add a technique, strategy, or input that will fit into the prepared design.

The training design produced was interactive. Any trainer who uses it may add to what had already been designed in the form of additional input or extra samples among others. The said training scheme was thus designed to meet the needs of college English teachers for them to develop students' communicative competence.

The planning of the scheme was made possible with the constant assistance of a languages expert, the researchers' mentor. The learning segments' topics came out after her thorough examination. With the topics already identified, the researchers went on to plan out the learning objectives for every learning segment and noted the competency measures for every training session.

Conclusions

Taking the findings as strong points for evaluating this research, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. 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.
2. Instruments such as FGD and questionnaire cannot be solely relied upon as baseline data in research. 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 design. This may be compared to other designs, with focus on the grammar approach to teaching English. Similarly, for the training content; too long content of segments may bore the readers/trainees. As such the presentations of concepts have to be capsulated in various formats.
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 design so that a trainee who uses it will just follow. Moreover, trainings should be conducted on days other than Monday. Blue Mondays may hinder the participants to attend such important sessions. They may also be late, still unprepared because of the weekend's activities.

REFERENCES

- Bartlett, Leo. (1990). *Teacher Development through Reflective Teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Danao, Neonitta D. (2002). *Confluence: Journeys, Content and Tasks for College Reading Skills Development*. Goldstar Pub. and Marketing. Cagayan de Oro City.
- Eugenio, Mark. (1999). *Teachers as assessors and assistants: Institutional constraints on interpersonal relationships*. Paper delivered at the meetings of the Philippine Educational Research Association, Quezon City.
- González-Bueno, M., & Pérez, L. C. (2000). Electronic mail in foreign language writing: A study of grammatical and lexical accuracy, and quantity of language. *Foreign Language Annals*, 33(2), 189-198.
- Hansen, M. G., Feldhusen, R. K., O'Connell, J. J. Liason, Tom, & Dynneson. (1994). *Black children: Their roots, culture, and learning style*. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press.
- Johns, Anne M. (1997). *Text, Role and Context Developing Academic Literacies*. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge. Australia.
- Krum, Wong. (1993). Styles of learning among Native children: A review of the research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 11, 27-37.
- Pica, Dorothy and Long, S. U. (1996). *The Invisible Culture: Communication in Classroom and Community on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation*. New York: Longman, Inc.
- Scott, R. G. & Burns, C. E. B. (1998). Phylogenetic processes in verbal language imitation. In: Speidel, G. E. & Nelson, K. (Eds.). *The many faces of imitation in language learning*. (pp. 231-250). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Song Seng, Law & Sock Hwee Low. (1997). *Lifelong Learning: Policies, Practices & Programs, An Empirical Framework for Implementing Lifelong Learning Systems*. School of Media Studies. Humber College. Canada.
- Venville, L. A., Jordan, C., & Tharp, R. G. (1998). *Explaining school failure, producing school success: Two cases*. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 18, 276-286.
- Wajrrib, Ruth. (1992). *Classroom Observation Tasks*. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge. Australia.