A TRAINING DESIGN FOR PARTICIPATORY LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This paper sought to design a training plan for participatory learning. Founded on the needs assessment stage, English teachers refashioned their teaching views, equipped with principles and strategies for active interaction in their language classes. Four learning segments were finalized after a four-day try out. The researcher used a five-stage model in undertaking the study that explicitly focused on: (1) the phases in the training design's development and (2) the contents of the training plan as research product.

The design produced in this paper ascertained for teachers to incorporate methodologies requiring students to actively participate in language classes. Developing students' oral communication skills is vital in language teaching, an essential for interactive survival in a global setting. The training design was developed for this purpose. The Capitol University Language professors needed keeping up with current trends in language teaching to better achieve language teaching's goal, that of developing students' oral communication skills.

A fraction of the segments produced led to the reconstruction of syllabuses. With the use of participatory learning techniques enclosed in the learning segments of the training design, these professors provided meaningful and interactive interaction, responsive to the learners' needs.

KEYWORDS: Participatory Learning, Training Design, Learning Segments

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is a necessity for learning to be continuing, interesting and enjoyable. Teachers who motivate students greatly enhance the classroom experience and learner performance. Classroom participation is the result. With the latter as an active ingredient, it results to insightful interaction and remarkable connection between teachers and students. Moreover, it fosters a high level of energy and enthusiasm in the classroom learning environment. However, poorly managed participation can also lead to instructor frustration and student confusion. Making the classroom participation more effective was the main target of this paper.

The subject participation is complex, and can be approached from a variety of theoretical perspectives (Gall, 2008). McCombs' (2006) research shows that for students to be optimally motivated to participate, they must believe that they possess the skills and competencies to successfully accomplish these learning goals. Furthermore, Russ (2001) posits that the relationship between teaching and learning is truly fascinating. In a teaching-learning scenario, an interaction that is meaningful, fluid, interactive and responsive to the learners' needs should be ideally provided. Hence, language teachers should look for varied ways to respond to this teaching challenge. To do this, teachers have to be prepared by updating themselves with the current language teaching trends. They have to keep up with the latest developments in teaching especially that language trends constantly change.

Song Seng (2001) 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 and active classroom participation. 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, 2002). Considering the importance of the classroom in a teaching-learning process, this research focused on looking at students in their language classes to see how their teachers hone their participatory skill. Developing this participative skill 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 comes in the form of participative learning. Most importantly, students need to know how to conceptualize concepts since it is in this arena where they base their moments to voice out their thoughts. Thus, the college classroom scenarios must equip students to become truly participative, Danao concludes.

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. 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 educational progress. This in turn develops his thinking skills. Hence, it is deduced that it is indeed a necessity to involve students in a participative learning environment which is the main goal of this research. The training design produced in this research then ensures that teachers will incorporate tasks involving participatory learning.

METHODOLOGY

The four stages towards the development of the training design were followed in this study. These were: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation. A needs analysis was done first to identify the needs of the college English teachers which revealed that they needed a training exposure based on the tabular presentation as follows:

Table 1: The Needs Analysis Results

Classes Observed	Nature of Classroom Interaction	Participatory Learning Style Employed
1	Non participative, only written activities were introduced	none
2	participative, mostly teacher talk	none
3	Non participative, mostly teacher talk	none
4	Non participative, mostly written activities for student exposure	none
5	Non participative, focused on pure teacher-talk/discussing the lesson	none
6	Non participative, only written activities only were introduced	none
7	Non participative, mostly teacher talk	none
8	Rich classroom interaction occurred	Role playing
9	Non participative, focused on teacher discussing the lesson	none
10	Rich classroom interaction occurred	Audible student discussion

The tabular presentation shown on the previous page revealed that only two out of the ten classes observed were exposed to a participative learning environment. Hence, the researcher designed the training for participatory learning considering its importance in areas of language discipline, dialogue, and feedback.

The researcher then finalized the proposed plan of her training design. This is the stage when the training scheme was designed. From the results of the analysis done, the researcher decided to create a training design composed of four learning segments. The baseline data results showed a need to train language teachers. Non-participative students in varied classrooms prevalently exist. This proves that language teachers in the try out schools do not give enough opportunities for college students to develop their participatory skill. This scenario needs checking; reason enough for the training design to be produced. The segment titles were decided on with topics on participatory learning. The table below shows the list of topics for the segments.

Table 2: The Learning Segments' Topics

Segment	Titles
1	The Affective side of Language Learning & Teaching
2	The Needed Communication Skills of College Students
3	The Strategies of Communicative Teaching
4	Communicative Assessment and Testing

After the segment titles were identified, the next step taken by the researcher was the development stage. With the design phase already done in the form of the training design, it was further simplified in the form of the learning segments.

The first learning segment discusses the affective side of language learning. It aims to expose the trainees to teaching concepts that are communication-centered. Situations are also provided for them to analyze their students' attitudes and feelings about learning the language.

An update on the rationale of participatory learning was the main focus of learning segment two. Here, trainees are given time to think about the essence of the said topic. In learning segment three entitled the strategies of communicative teaching, topics were introduced to inform trainees on what their students need in terms of participative competence. Also presented were the various aspects of language for the trainees' review. A usual endpoint of any teaching act is testing. A summative portion discusses for the last part of the learning segments entitled: Communicative Testing and Assessment.

These segments went through a series of revisions before the final form. After these, the segments came out in its final form with four salient features. These are: *'What's in This Segment', 'What You are Expected to Experience', 'What are You Gonna Do'* and the *'Self Check'* section. The learning segments were finalized and tried out on the College of Arts and Sciences faculty of CU as trainees in the four-day training session. The trainers who were known to be specialists in the topics of the various segments were invited to conduct the training. This phase also included the efficiency of the training material as the trainers scrutinized the segments before the try out process was done.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the learning segments were measured afterwards. The evaluation occurred throughout the entire instructional design process – within phases, between phases, and after implementation. This appeared in dual form, the formative and summative evaluation.

Formative evaluation, an on-going type of evaluation, was done before and during the implementation of the training design. These were done through the consolidated effort of the panel members, trainers and the research adviser. The panel examined the training scheme during the dissertation proposal of the researcher. The trainers scrutinized the segments before implementation. The research adviser corrected and made the refinement of the segments possible. Also, during implementation, the trainees evaluated the segments' content and presentation in huddle sessions.

The summative evaluation occurred after the final version of the training scheme was tried out. This assessed the overall effectiveness of the learning segments. Both trainers and trainees did this. An evaluation form modified from Scott and Parry's model (1997) was used by the trainees while the trainers used an evaluation model modified from Morrow's (1998).

RESULTS

This section presents the analysis of data gathered through the aforementioned needs analysis procedures and the final form of the training design. The presentation is arranged preceded by the problem statement and then the findings.

The Stages Composing the Development of the Training Scheme for College Communicative Teaching

By using the similar models of Seels and Glasgow and the Systematic Approach to Training (SAT), the researcher followed the stages as modified in the development of the training design: (1) Needs Analysis, (2) Plan, (3) Create, (4) Try Out and (5) Assess (NAPCTA). These stages explain how the training design was developed.

The Needs Analysis Stage

In this stage, the sources of baseline data were identified. This was then conducted for the needs assessment namely, classroom observation.

The Planning Stage

Because the baseline data revealed that teachers lack competencies, a training design was planned for college English teachers. The researcher then decided to come up with a training designed for these teachers so that the competencies they lack will be met. Its contents were based from the baseline data gathered as cited. The design of the training however fits to any desired audience. English teachers from other Universities can use the scheme especially when they want to maximize the communicative abilities of students in their classes.

The Creation Stage

Right after the design/plan was wrapped up, the researcher began to develop her plan. The following explain the processes she undertook. The training design was finally made into a material in this stage. The development of the material was based on the four topics identified during the planning stage. Various references were considered as sources of data to enrich each learning segment. The main focus was always on the needed competencies of college English teachers. Internet materials, books, leaflets and brochures were consulted for the preliminary gathering of data sources.

The Try out Stage

For the try out stage of the training design, four-day training was conducted. Selected trainers who were experts in the field of communicative teaching conducted the learning segments.

The Assessment Stage

Assessment is usually listed last. However, in this research, assessment was done in the duration of the entire training scheme. This is to ensure that the researcher's job is kept on track and for her to identify improvements immediately. Hence, there were three stages involved in the evaluation of the training scheme. For its total refinement, evaluations were done before, during and after the training process. The data results on the trainers' evaluation was correlated to draw out an interrater reliability of the overall results. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used for this. The following are the results:

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TRAINER 1	4.0000	.5941	18
TRAINER 2	4.2778	.7519	18
TRAINER 3	2.6667	1.0290	18

Table 4: Correlations

	TRAINER 1	TRAINER 2	TRAINER 3
TRAINER 1 Pearson Correlation	1.000	.395	.385
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.105	.115
N	18	18	18
TRAINER 2 Pearson Correlation	.395	1.0000	.659**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.105	.	.003
N	18	18	18
TRAINER 3 Pearson Correlation	.385	.659**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	.115	.003	.
N	18	18	18

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The above data shows that trainer 1 who handled segments 1-4 rated the learning segments with a mean of 4.000. This implies that she found the segments *good* in a scale of 1-5. Trainer 2 gave the highest rating with a mean of 4.2778. She handled learning segment 5 and rated this *good*. The third trainer who conducted segment 4 gave a rating summary with a mean of 2.6667. This can be rounded off to 3 which is a satisfactory rating to segment 4

The Contents of the Learning Segments for Participatory Learning

The training design is composed four segments. Its contents were arrived at after the results of the needs analysis. The sources used by the researcher were the different books on communicative language teaching.

Each segment contains headings named as: 'what's in this segment', 'what you are expected to experience', and 'what are you gonna do'. *What's in this segment* is an introductory part of the segments. *What you are expected to experience* provides the expected outcomes to be attained by the trainees. *What are you gonna do* gives a guide for trainees to follow as they move from one topic to the next. The segments are composed of different topics on communicative teaching. These are in the form of 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.

- 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.

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