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Development of Theory-Based Strategies Localized Materials to Facilitate L1 to L2: Focus on Oral Competency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine strategies used by teachers in English in facilitating transition from L1 to the L2, focusing on theory-based strategies and development of localized material to address students' difficulties in learning L2 helping them improve their ability in speaking L2. The researcher used the descriptive method and devised questionnaires and interview and pre-oral and post-oral examination to gather data. Purposive sampling technique was used in the study in the 185 Grade 7 students (from sections Jasmine, Yellowbell, Dahlia, and Rose) and five (5) teachers in English of Batia High School Extension. Further, the respondents' most common difficulties in learning L2 as perceived by the teachers, relate with psychological factors. They were apprehensive to talk with their teachers and in front of the class, fearing of committing grammatical mistakes. Thus, the solution was making the learners motivated by using genuine praises and honest feedback. In relation, the statistical treatment One Sample T-test was used to determine the significant difference between the speaking levels of the respondents in the pretest and posttest. It was found out that there was a significant difference between the pretest and the post test scores which showed that there was a significant improvement of the test scores, which means that the Grade 7 students' ability in speaking the English language has improved.

KEYWORDS – English speaking, theory-based, localized materials, oral competency, SLA theories

INTRODUCTION

English is the second most widely used spoken language in the world with 983 million speakers, having Mandarin ranked as first with 1.1 billion language speakers.[1], In the Philippines, English became the official language and became the sole medium of instruction since year 1901 and continued to be the official language of government and schools from 1946 to present. [2] At this status, English became dominant in business, politics, and education, and most official government publications and legal documents are published in the said language. It is also associated with career advancement and social mobility, particularly evident in the growing call center industry. It is the language used in the business world and in computer technology, particularly in the movie industry, internet, and even in traveling to various places in the world. It is considered the lingua franca the world because it is commonly used to close a deal with businesspeople, especially with foreigners. Cabigon (2015) stated that:

that it is the language of commerce and law, as well as the primary medium of instruction in education. It is the language used in writing researches and other scientific articles made by renowned authors. Even in posting a status in Facebook, putting captions in Instagram, tweeting, and searching for information in Google search platform, English language is the preferred language to use by most people. In watching foreign movies, English translation is the common subtitles used. Therefore, English is indeed a must-learn language. [3]

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However, based on the latest survey of the English Proficiency Index 2017, the Philippines did not rank even in the top 10 although third in the previous years. It is in rank 15. Moreover, as mentioned by Valderrama (2018) in her article, Rex Wallen Tan, general manager of Hopkins International Partners, Inc., cited initial results of a two-year study that indicate the English proficiency level of college graduates in the Philippines is lower than the proficiency target set for high school students in Thailand and the competency requirement for taxi drivers in Dubai. [4]

According to Tan, the average English proficiency score of a Philippine college graduate is 631.4, based on the metrics of the Test of English for International Communication. However, cab drivers in Dubai, the largest city in the United Arab Emirates, are expected to have a TOEIC proficiency score of 650 while business process outsourcing agents should have a score of 850

in the metric. Tan's analysis manifests consistency in the results of students' performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT) and the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE), indicating a decline in the quality of Philippine education at the elementary and secondary levels, particularly in English proficiency. [5]

Selected public secondary school teachers explained that some of their Grade 7 students cannot even recognize the alphabet and are considered non-readers. Same dilemma is experienced by another grade 7 teacher in English in Sta. Maria National High School. She uttered that many of her students cannot understand her as she speaks in English. In addition, another teacher stated that many of the students cannot read simple to complex words and some have relatively short attention span when learning English.

More so, a grade 7 teacher in English reiterated that if he would express the status of English learning in their school with the scale of 1-5, he would choose 2. Blatantly, the English learning in schools is stuck to L1. Teachers in English tend to code-switch so that their students can understand them. They cannot help but to translate the phrases or sentences that they said. The Filipino children have poor performance in using the language, in writing, more so in speaking English. In an interview conducted by the researcher to selected students in public schools, English is one of the most difficult subjects for them. They find speaking English a very challenging task. Moreover, the majority of them do not have the cultural environment in English. They are not exposed to speaking the language. Because of this, they are afraid to use the language resulting to no mastery. All of these pieces of evidence all boil down to the difficulty of using the English language. They are adequate proof that there is indeed a decline of English proficiency. With such, this study aims to provide theory-based activities to facilitate transition in language learning, focusing on speaking. These include the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theories that can be used in the teaching of speaking English in the classroom.

Transition is a process, development, or period of changing from one step or condition to another.

Moreover, transitional learning in language is acquiring, understanding, and using the English language through the various communicative strategies that the teacher will use with his/her students. More so, it is a step-by-step procedure of learning the language from the simplest to the most complex activities that L2 students should master to learn the English language using theory-based and communicative strategies.

Because of the above-mentioned concerns, this study developed a theory-based strategy localized materials to help students facilitate the proper transition from L1 to L2 which focused on oral competency. The respondents of this study are the 185 Grade 7 students and five (5)

teachers in English of Batia High School in Batia, Bocaue, Bulacan. Barangay Batia, among the barangays in Bocaue, is the most populous barangay with 30, 927 population having 6, 601 households based on its socio-economic profile.

It has the greatest number of relocation areas namely Northville V, St. Martha Estate Homes, and AFP/PNP Housing Site, and has four (4) elementary schools: Northville V Elementary, St. Martha Elementary, Bocaue Hills Elementary, and Batia Elementary School but has only one (1) secondary school that is Batia High School (BHS). With such, majority of the students from these elementary schools went to BHS making it populous with a class size ranging from 60-70 in the present. In its early years (2013-2016), BHS had a class size of 90-100 students. The school has two (2) two-storey-10-classroom buildings and offered shifting classes way back in 2013-2016. Due to the large number of class sizes and very limited classrooms, the DepEd (Department of Education) granted a three-storey-15-classroom building to its former Officer-In-Charge. It is situated in Tambubong, Bocaue, Bulacan and is called Batia High School Extension where Grade 7 and Grade 8 students are in while the higher levels stay in its main campus.

With this, the school refrained from offering shifting classes and resumed to whole day ones. Yet, the circumstances are the same. Classes are overcrowded and there are inadequate facilities and learning materials for the students. Due to the situation at home and in school, students belong to the economically depressed sector of the society. They are considered disadvantaged.

Because of the above-mentioned concerns, this research considered developing theory-based strategies and localized materials that can help Grade 7 students S.Y. 2018-2019 in Batia High School Extension in Tambubong, Bocaue, Bulacan. The localized materials may help facilitate transition from L1 to L2 which focused on speaking skills

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized experimental and descriptive research design to analyze data. Descriptive research primarily concerned with finding out "what is," might be applied to investigate research questions. It also involves collection of data which can describe events to be organized and tabulated for results presentation). It is used to obtain information concerning the present status of the phenomena to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in the situation.

Using Experimental design pre-test-posttest strategy, the researcher conducted pre-oral and post-oral examinations on the students. The pre-oral examination was to determine the level of

speaking of the students whether they were a beginner, elementary, or pre-intermediate; while the post-oral examination was conducted to determine the progress of the students. The administration of the examination was done in December 2019 after the development of the localized material, the Primer on Speaking for Disadvantaged Freshmen as an intervention which started in March 2020. A post-oral examination was also held in the same month.

The researcher conducted oral examinations to the respondents determining their level of speaking the English language. After the pre-oral examination, she categorized the students according to their speaking skills level based on CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) for Languages which is an international tool for measuring and describing language levels. During the implementation and tryout of the material, the strategies to facilitate transition from L1 to L2 (based on learning theories and theories on Second Language Acquisition or SLA, were implemented.

In this connection, the localized material (Primer on Speaking for Disadvantaged Freshmen) having theory-based strategies, was validated by the qualified Master Teachers in English from different schools and the school LRMDs or Learning Resources Management and Development System Coordinator. of Bulacan. After the validation, the material was then utilized in the English 7 classes to measure its effectiveness.

Tables

Table 1. Pretest and Posttest Results of Grade 7 Students

CEFR Level (Description)	Jasmine		Yellowbell		Dahlia		Rose	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
0 (Beginner)	29	0	24	0	18	0	23	0
A1 (Elementary)	17	39	20	37	23	30	19	32
A2 (Pre-Intermediate)	5	12	2	9	2	13	3	13

As for the elementary level students, the latter has the most number with 23 and Jasmine gets the least with 17 learners. For the pre-intermediate level, Jasmine has 5 while Yellowbell and Dahlia have 2.

Whereas, for the posttest, it is clearly seen that in the said test, there are no beginners at all, while for the elementary level, Jasmine gets the highest with 39 students while Dahlia gets the least with 30. For the pre-intermediate, the latter and Rose have the most number with 13 students while Yellowbell gets the least having nine (9) students.

Table 9. One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	185	4.87	2.643	.194
Posttest	185	9.91	2.910	.214

Table 10. One-Sample T-Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Pretest	25.068	184	.000	4.870	4.49	5.25
Posttest	46.329	184	.000	9.914	9.49	10.34

The tables show that there is significant difference IN the pretest scores and the post test scores which evidently shows that there was a significant improvement of the test scores from the initial test to the final test. The mean difference between the two distributions were also significantly higher with the pretest having a mean difference of 4.87 and a mean difference of 9.9 in the posttest.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the statistical treatment of the study, the following findings were drawn:

The most common difficulties of the participants in learning L2, which are perc eived by the teachers, are related to psychological factors. They are shy and nervous to talk with their teachers and in front of the class. It is because they are afraid to commit grammatical mistakes in speaking. They find it difficult to communicate in English because they do not want to be mocked and embarrassed in class.

It is revealed that the most effective strategies that English teachers in BHS use in their classes pertain to the affective approach. Students are encouraged to speak in English if they are knowledgeable of the importance of the second language in their lives not only in the present but also for the future.

Students nowadays engage in activities if they know the reason for doing so and if they realize the benefits that it will give them later in life. Moreover, they are motivated through

giving them genuine praise and honest feedback of their progress in learning L2. More so, aside from these techniques related with the affective factor, using theory-based strategies and the localized material (Primer on Speaking for Disadvantaged Freshmen) is of great help because the teachers drew their methodologies from the theories used by the renowned linguists.

It is shown that using the One Sample T-test, there is a significant difference between the pretest scores and the post test scores. It is shown that there was a significant improvement of the test scores from the initial test to the final test. The mean difference between the two distributions were also significantly higher with the pretest having a mean difference of 4.87 and a mean difference of 9.9 in the posttest. It means that the improvement is real and not by chance.

Primer on Speaking for Disadvantaged Students” is the localized material that the researcher created to help the respondents in their acquisition of oral competency. The activities are based on the theories of SLA. Also, this intervention material uses localization making it easier for the students to relate with the sentences and situations because they are familiar with the context, and it arouses their interest of learning the English language.

It is sequenced from the simplest to the most complex speaking activities where the learners will find learning the second language enjoyable and meaningful.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Using the statistical treatment mentioned, there is a significant difference between the respondents’ speaking levels in the pretest and posttest which conveys that their progress of learning the English language is true, and not by chance. In a nutshell, formal English instruction in Grade 7 can facilitate transition from L1 to L2 through the theory-based activities and localized material which is the Primer on Speaking for Disadvantaged Freshmen.

In light of the outcomes and conclusion, the researcher humbly recommends the following:

Teachers. Findings of this study may be used by the teachers in English because they can be knowledgeable of the effective strategies that will help them to make their students speak in English. Moreover, it can be of great help for them in teaching the second language to the class. Based on the findings, students’ difficulties in speaking L2 are related to psychological factors which means teachers should make the learners understand the importance of the L2 in their lives in the present, especially in the future. Also, for students to appreciate learning L2, teachers should give them genuine praises for the progress that they achieve and honest feedback for the improvement that they make. In addition, the localized material developed by the researcher can help the learners to learn L2 easier for they can easily relate with the situations because it uses localization and theory-based activities.

School Administrators and Principals. The school may consider using the developed learning materials. School administrators may focus on helping the disadvantaged students in the school to boost their self-esteem in using the English language. They should show equality to all students in giving programs that will help them in their English language learning. They should conduct programs that will motivate the students to speak in English by giving extrinsic motivation like rewards for those students who will try their best to speak L2. Because students find it difficult to speak L2 since they are afraid to commit mistakes based on the findings, the administrators may think of language activities that will help them to be more confident like a conversation with their classmates and schoolmates where they will be rewarded for exerting effort to use L2. Speaking with someone within their age group will encourage the learners to speak in English. Moreover, they should promote the use of the primer to their teachers as it will help the students to learn their L2 easier.

Students. The learners may join the different programs of the school promoting the culture of speaking in English. They may use the rewards as their motivation for them to use the English language. Also, since they find it difficult to speak L2 because of the fear of committing grammatical mistakes, they may consider talking in English with their classmates and schoolmates to practice speaking L2. If they realize that it is normal to make grammatical mistakes when speaking, gradually, it will boost their self-esteem. Moreover, the use of the localized material drawn from the theories of SLA is encouraged for them to continuously develop their skills in speaking English since the primer uses localization for them to easily relate with the activities given.

Academic Researchers. The study is of great help for those who will choose the same topic for their paper. They may broaden and deepen the research by focusing on psychological factors that affect the difficulties of the students in learning the English language, especially those learners who are considered disadvantaged.

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