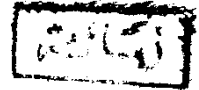


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Utilizing Correspondence To Develop
The Teaching Skills Of English
Language Teachers
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A Ph.D. Dissertation

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An Abstract

This study investigates the feasibility of training through correspondence, which is one form of distance training, and its effectiveness in the Egyptian context. The argument is that distance training has become a must to overcome many practical and educational constraints in conventional training.

In this investigation the researcher developed the psychological and pedagogical conditions for teacher training. The training situation is an educational one in the first place, a fact which is often overlooked. Another fact which is also often overlooked is that the in-service training clients are always adult learners. The conditions developed cater for those two aspects.

Since the subjects of this study are senior teachers of English, the study provides a survey of their training needs for two types of courses:

- a) Orientation courses (Courses which they have to take when they are newly promoted.)
- b) Remedial training (Courses which remediate any deficiency in their performance.)

The researcher tried out two forms of training material:

- a) Readings in teaching English (for Experimental Group I)
- b) Self-access training modules (for Experimental Group II)

The aim was to find out which form of material would be more effective in the training of senior teachers of English.

The two forms of material effected significant improvement in the teachers' performance as demonstrated by their application of the teaching techniques dealt with (questioning). Experimental Group II scored significantly higher than Experimental Group I. It should be noted that the course trainers provided guidance for the trainees.

There are at least seven implications for this study:

- 1) There is a need to develop more self-access training modules dealing with the other training needs of senior teachers of English.
- 2) Writers of articles which describe 'new' teaching techniques should develop their description into a modular form because the aim is to help teachers apply such techniques.
- 3) There is also a need for supplementary material and guidance to go with English language teaching periodicals.
- 4) Inspectors should be trained to conduct distance training.
- 5) Senior teachers' training needs should be surveyed periodically every five years or so.
- 6) The Ministry of Education should develop constructive observation sheets for the use of the teachers.
- 7) There is a need to adopt distance training courses as a regular practice in in-service training.

- 1 -

CHAPTER ONE
THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to state the following:

- 1-Importance of the problem
 - 2-The problem
 - 3-Hypotheses
 - 4-Research procedure
 - 5-Significance of the study
 - 6-Limitation of the study
 - 7-Operational definitions
 - 8-Organization of the remainder of the thesis
- The first item to state is the importance of the problem.

Importance Of The Problem

The importance of the problem of this study will be pointed out through a discussion of :

- a-In-service training facing a new challenge
- b-Conventional training
- c-Training through correspondence

A) In-Service Training Facing A New Challenge

Teacher in-service training has been assigned a major role in the educational process. This is mainly due to the recent immense augmentation in human knowledge and the vast advance in its application.

'The days when a teacher could be deemed to have acquired a bank of knowledge which he could find adequate to sustain him throughout his professional life have gone for ever.'

(Johnston: 1971: 9-10) To keep pace with this new growth in knowledge is an 'undeniable challenge to the teacher.'

(Johnston : 1971: 9-10)

The teaching of English, for example, has recently witnessed the rise of many hypotheses about language learning and language teaching. The Monitor Model is an example of such hypotheses. It differentiates between language learning as a conscious process and language acquisition as an unconscious process.

There is also a new approach in the teaching of languages, namely, the communicative approach, which has resulted in major changes in syllabus design. In fact, the concept of communicative competence has highlighted new dimensions in the teaching of English, namely, the sociolinguistic aspect (Finocchiaro, 1982:5), providing the scales of appropriateness and acceptability. Other studies have added more dimensions to the concept of communicative competence, namely, discourse competence, strategic competence, and grammatical competence.

These new perspectives have effected many changes in the teaching of English.

Grammar, for example, 'is not an end in itself, but ... a means of carrying out communicative intent.' (Salimnene, 1983:2). Such rapid and immense changes have led to a wide variety of classroom techniques and procedures. These in turn have had their implications on the target competence of the teacher of English as a foreign language (EFL). Needless to say, one of the major aims of in-service training is to develop teacher competence.

In fact, in-service training programs can develop teacher competence by (a) helping teachers catch up with the

latest findings in human knowledge as far as their career is concerned, and (b) equipping them with new teaching skills to bridge the gap between 'advancing knowledge and practice.' (James :1973 :15) This is true of the teachers of any subject including English.

The immense amount of the latest findings in human knowledge about teaching and learning a foreign language, and the new teaching skills required to teach it constitute a challenge to conventional training. So, it is important to investigate and develop in-service training to make it more effective. This has been recommended by the Ministry of Education in Educational Policy In Egypt (1985 :35). It has also been recommended by El-Lakkani (1982 :282), drawing our attention to the dynamic nature of the training situation and how a change in one variable (e.g. course content or course participants) would stimulate a series of changes in the other variables (e.g. the training method).

B) Conventional Training

When one investigates conventional training, one finds that there is evidence against its validity as a system of life-long education which has to cope with the immense information now available about language learning and language teaching. It is also an inefficient system which can hardly develop teachers' teaching skills to the required standard. That state of affairs is due to very practical reasons as well as to educational ones.

In fact, conventional training is not always a reliable system because of practical constraints. It is difficult, for example, to release the teachers of English long enough to equip them with the 'new' information and skills, not to mention the frequency of such release. That is why the duration of training courses ranges from three to two weeks in most cases. (See Table 1)

(Table I)

(The duration and the number of the training courses run in the six main training centres from 1982 to 1987)

Year	Duration and Number of Courses			
	3 Days	One Week	Two Weeks	More Than Two Weeks
1982/83	-	2	3	-
1983/84	-	3	3	-
1984/85	1	5	4	-
1985/86	-	6	3	-
1986/87	1	8	1	-

Such limitation of course duration lessens the efficiency of conventional training as a system of teacher lifelong education.

Another problem with conventional training courses is that they fall short of important psychological and pedagogical conditions which should be the bases of training adult learners. The procedural realization of conventional training, for example, consists of lecturing, demonstration, and practice. Appendix I is the timetable of a conventional training course (A Refresher Course for Senior Teachers of English run in

Cairo Training Centre from 15th to 27th September 1984.)

The processes of observation and imitation, which are behind the training method, are not simple to do. They require interpretation of the material and the teaching techniques observed, perception of the salient features of the technique(s), storage, organization of output, and motor output.

Needless to say, the previous experience of the trainees, especially in the case of experienced teachers, would cause inhibitions in the training situation. That is why experts in educational psychology assert the importance of the factor of time as a crucial element in the learning/training situation. Mills (1977 :21) tells us that a man 'can take in only a limited amount in a particular time: increasing the pace or the lecturing time, or the number of periods, will not necessarily increase the amount learnt and assimilated.' This has been confirmed by Daoud (1981 :31), who tells us that a learner needs some time (About a week) to process the newly learned items. Those items, in fact, go through a process/period of interaction in order for them to become part of the cognitive structure of the learner.

A distinguishing feature of teacher training is that the learners are adults. That state of affairs implies that the training techniques must be based on the psychology of adult education. Rogers (1977 :41), for example, tells us that an adult learner suffers a potential conflict in learning because he 'has already well-developed ideas about himself along with his own system of ideas and beliefs. To admit that he needs to learn something new is to admit that there is something wrong with his present system.'