An Educational Model for Improving English Proficiency Scores[1]

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Introduction

Students from many Asian countries are enrolling in English learner programs with the desire to improve their English in a minimum span of time. Costs for students not only include tuition and living expenses, but also sacrificing time away from their family. Most students are on scholarships and those providing financial assistance do not recognize the stress factors that complicate the language learning process. In addition, the government in our setting will not continue to issue visas to students taking longer than two semesters at a graduate theological institution without the student taking graduate seminary level classes. To provide possible solutions, this research will explore the reasons why students fail to reach the desired proficiency for admission into APNTS.

The results of the proficiency exams given at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS), Manila, Philippines, June 2010-June 2012, will be analyzed. The range of scores that have a 68% probability rate of reaching 500 in one semester will be found by looking at the standard deviation of the average increase in proficiency scores after one semester of language study. In addition, the data will be studied of those who have obtained a score of 500 to see if there is a positive correlation to the initial score and the number of semesters of English study.

The goal of the study is to show a need for an improvement of the educational model to increase the proficiency scores of the students in a minimum number of semesters.

Background Study

These students have earned undergraduate degrees from universities in non-English speaking environments with various levels of academic requirements. A theoretical foundation of second language acquisition of adults, teaching methodology, and curriculum design for adults with advanced beginner English skills will be given.

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Second Language Acquisition

Research reflecting adult second language learners will be reviewed. The philosophy of second language acquisition (SLA), factors that affect learning, and observable traits of SLA will be addressed to present a summary of the current research that applies to the research problem.

Philosophy of SLA

Second language acquisition (SLA) has two major divisions among theorists, those who view SLA as a social process and those who feel it is a cognitive process according to Long.[2] Those who look at the acquisition of a language as a cognitive process are either nativist or empiricist. Nativists base their view on innate abilities, innate mechanisms, or a combination of the two in language learning. Most children will learn the language without problems, but adults often have difficulty. These difficulties may be due to not being able to use all the mechanisms (general nativists) or that adults may have passed the time in their lives when language is naturally acquired (hybrid nativists). Long continues that the empiricists base their theory on the belief that experience with the target language has a stronger influence than any genetic tendencies on fluency.[3] Therefore, as adults learning a second language, the philosophy of the educational model must be based on empiricism.

Factors that Affect Learning

Empiricist models interact with the cognitive and affective domains within the physical brain. In recent years, technology has allowed scientists to observe the brain while it is working. These observations have given documentation to support or refute theories of how language is learned.

The style and ease of learning a second language is directly affected by the way people think and process information, their cognitive style. Cognitive styles have been studied to try to describe what characteristics are necessary for successful language learners. Empirically, it is obvious that some students seem to learn a second language fluently in a relatively short period of time while others seem to study diligently and continue to have difficulty in improving their proficiency scores. Two characteristics, shown on a continuum, are reflection / impulsivity and field independence / dependence. These characteristics were studied by Sperry in 1972.[4] Several

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[2]Michael H. Long, *Problems in SLA* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007).

[3]Ibid.

[4]Joan Jamieson, "The Cognitive Styles of Reflection/Impulsivity and Field Independence/Dependence and ESL Success," in *Reading on Second Language Acquisition*, ed. H. Douglas Brown and Susan Gonzo (Upper Saddle

characteristics have been studied in other areas of social science, but these two have been found to affect language learning the most. Jamieson explains that reflection and impulsivity as the style of thinking a person does when several alternative solutions are given to a problem. Field dependence is also defined as how a person perceives what they see as separate from its surroundings (independent) or blended into the whole (dependent). In other words, it is the ability to think analytically. Jamieson reflects on the research in SLA and has come to the conclusion that these two styles affect language learning as a whole. For example, she says that field independent and impulsive, but accurate thinkers will succeed on the TOEFL paper based test (PBT) much more easily than those who do not have these characteristics. She continues in her summary that this example does not give proof that field independence and accurate impulsivity are the only skills that should be valued. Her recommendation is that research should be done on a variety of language tasks needed for fluency, rather than just the receptive skills measured by the (PBT) TOEFL proficiency test.[5] Communicative competence (fluency) cannot be truly measured by the (PBT) TOEFL score. Long has noted empirically that students who perform well on a proficiency test such as the (PBT) TOEFL does not guarantee success in the academic setting. Long also shares that the reverse may be true, someone who performs well in the academic setting may have trouble earning the proficiency exam score needed.[6]

Another major factor concerns the affective domain. Personality varies with each individual and plays a significant role in language learning. The Affective Filter Hypothesis, Krashen defines the best environment for second language learners is where they feel positive and relaxed.[7]

From experiential observations, international students at APNTS are often stressed by culture shock and financial pressures. Dye gives four causes of stress due to culture shock: 1) emotionally and mentally involvement in situations that deal with a culture different than their own, 2) cultural values that differ between ethnic groups, 3) frustration occurring when working with people from other cultures, and 4) different personalities reactions to the cultural differences due to personality.[8] Culture shock is unavoidable; there will be stress for those in a new environment. As a result, the efficiency of their language learning is affected, especially in their first semester. When the student retakes the proficiency exam, the fear of not succeeding causes more stress. Then after one year, a few students are caught in a cycle of fear and stress, with some unsuccessful in increasing their score forcing them to leave.

River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Regents, 1995) citing L. Sperry, *Learning Performances and Individual Differences* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1972).

[5]Joan Jamieson, "The Cognitive Styles of Reflection/Impulsivity and Field Independence/Dependence and ESL Success," in *Reading on Second Language Acquisition*, ed. H. Douglas Brown and Susan Gonzo (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Regents, 1995).

[6]Long.

[7]S. D. Krashen, *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications* (New York: Longman, 1985).

[8]T. Wayne Dye, "Stress-Producing Factors in Cultural Adjustment," (*Missiology: An International Review* 2 (1974): 61-77.

Advances in neuroscience have provided new insights into learning from the physical viewpoint. Our physical brain has capabilities and limitations that affect language learning. David Sousa has summarized some major discoveries in neuroscience, with seven impacting adults who are learning a second language.   First, increased activity increases blood flow to the brain, which improves cognitive processing. Exercise is a key to successful learning. Second, the lack of emotional security and safety is stressful and has biological implications in the learning process. Third, social and cultural responses occur in specific brain areas, which are related to self-esteem. Development of these brain areas that create responses which benefit learning is crucial. Fourth, new neurons can be developed in the hippocampus area of the brain, which is the location of long-term memory development. This development is also inter-related to attitude, good nutrition, regular exercise, and maintaining low levels of stress. Fifth, neuroplasticity of the brain allows the brain to find new pathways to process brain functions. Dyslexic students as well as poor language learners can be shown how to improve their skills. Sixth, retention of working memory depends largely on the purposefulness of the information and the way it is encoded in the long-term memory. Finally, sleep is important for the brain's health, but also it is the time it works to make connections and carry-out process for long-term memory.[9] Neuroscience research has given physical proof to support many SLA theories that have been developed in recent years.

Important Theories Related to SLA

The following three theories are very important in designing an educational model for graduate students.

Interlanguage development, the internal language skill set used between beginning to learn language and achieving fluency, according to Wilkins, is not a straight upward line toward proficiency).[10] Students should be aware of that often the subsequent exam score does not show improvement or can even be less. Without being aware of this, students can become discouraged which will affect the student's learning potential.

Comprehensible and meaningful learning are interrelated. A well-known theorist, Krashen developed the Monitor Theory that includes two aspects: Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis which impact adults that are learning a second language. The Input Hypothesis refers to giving comprehensible material to students that is just one level higher than

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[9]David Sousa, ed., *Mind, Brain, and Education: Neuroscience Implications for the Classroom* (Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2010).

[10]D. Wilkins, "Language, Language Acquisition and Syllabus Design: Some Recent Issues," (*English Teacher* Korea 49, 41-56) quoted in Michael H. Long, *Problems in SLA* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007).

the student can easily comprehend.[11] Immersion in graduate level courses before the student has adequate communication skills is not beneficial in language learning, as the Input Hypothesis by Krashen supports. The student would also be penalized by the incomplete comprehension of a foundational course. In addition, professors at the graduate level should not be expected to provide additional materials to support the fledging student.

Meaningful learning is contrasted to rote learning according to David Ausubel in his subsumption theory. Ausubel theorized in 1963 that learning occurs when new information relates in some way to knowledge and concepts already existing in the permanent memory of a person. The brain organizes the new information with the existing information, allowing the new material to fit into and become part of the cognitive structure.[12]

All three of these theories dramatically impact the design of an educational model for learning a second language.

Teaching Methodology

There have been many methodologies used in teaching language. Grammar translation was used for many years, followed by the audio-lingual method after WWII. Currently, communicative language teaching (CLT) has emerged as the predominant teaching method.

Prior to the communicative language teaching methodology (CLT), the audio-lingual method (ALM) was popular in Asia. Many current non-native English language teachers were trained using ALM. These teachers were successful at learning language to a level that was required to pass proficiency tests that primarily measured language proficiency through good objective test taking strategies. ALM used dialogues, drills, repetition, memorization, and pattern practice and is considered a synthetic or bottom-up method which teaches grammatical and vocabulary rules first, and then asks the student to synthesize the elements of language. CLT is based on the theory that language is more about communication of meaning by interacting with people through language.[13] CLT is not teacher-oriented, but student-oriented. Students are involved in tasks that develop their communication skills in a second language. CLT is considered analytical or a top-down method which uses topics, readings, and interesting tasks for the learner allowing the student to discover the parts of the language.

CLT methodology is imperative for students who need to progress quickly to fluency in a cross-cultural situation. CLT teaching principles[14] that are critical for ESL training at the

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[11]Krashen.
[12]H. Douglas Brown, *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* 3rd ed. (Pearson Education, Inc., 2007).
[13]Ibid.
[14]Ibid.

seminary level are 1) automaticity – developing the ability to process information fast enough to comprehend large amounts of reading and writing assignments; 2) strategic investment - reinforcing the need for students to find their personal learning style, and to wean from depending on the teacher to give information; 3) autonomy – strengthening the student's concept of their own ability to discover and improve skills and strategies by practicing or doing more than just the homework assigned; and 4) language ego – instilling confidence in students who were top English students in their home country, but now feel that they know very little in the English speaking atmosphere of the seminary. These principles combined with the student-oriented active learning processing are needed to learn a language fluently.

Another type of learning that should be incorporated into the curriculum, is cooperative learning. Suggested by Brozo & Simpson, this type of activity would allow students to learn social and collaboration skills that are needed in ministry. A cooperative learning group would learn to succeed as a team, to be personally accountable for providing input, to work directly with people who have different cultural ways, and to use good collaborative skills.[15]

Tomlinson emphasized that learners should be able to have opportunities to develop higher cognitive skills needed in their ministries as they develop fluency, not just language acquisition at the basic level.[16] Students are often more familiar with synthetic styles (student must synthesize the language from grammar rules and vocabulary) of education in Asia, which causes frustration for students who are not adaptable or flexible in nature. Students who have been accustomed to an ALM emphasis in language education will continue to focus on memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary. The students' perception that the obstacle to graduate level classes is a score of 500 on the proficiency exam, feeds this expectation for language training to be familiar to the educational methodology in their home country. Reality is that academic success on the graduate level takes additional cognitive skills that are not measured on the PBT TOEFL exam. CLT methodology is necessary to prepare students in the cognitive skills necessary for graduate level classes taught in English.

Another aspect of CLT is that grammar is interwoven into the curriculum to guide students to communicative competency at all levels of language. Grammar deals with the sentence level structure and does not look at how sentences work together to communicate meaning in both the spoken and written language. Also, language is much more than the discourse level, but also the semantic (word meaning) and the pragmatic (contextual meaning) aspects of language. Brown notes the importance of these three dimensions: grammar, semantics, and pragmatics. He also adds that grammar is important, not as a set of rules or facts, but as a skill.[17] Sandra Savignon in her chapter on CLT, explains that communicative

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[15]William G. Brozo, and Michele L. Simpson, *Readers, Teachers, Learners: Expanding Literacy Across the Content Areas*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003).
[16]Brian Tomlinson, "Principles of Effective Materials Development," in *English Language Teaching Materials: Theory and Practice*, ed. Nigel Harwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
[17]Brown.

competency consists of grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence.[18]

Celce-Murcia & Hilles also remind teachers that different approaches to grammar should be used to reach the different types of learner strategies: analytical and holistic. They quote Hatch, et al. that "rule learners"[19] are analytical which is not often utilized by children. Children are often holistic "data gatherers"[20] along with many adults and learn when they are exposed to meaningful language. Brown reminds teachers that grammar instruction should vary in its delivery because of the learning styles of the students. Analytical students will benefit from technical terminology and explanations, while holistic learners will have difficulty in this type of presentation.[21] CLT methodology proves a framework for both learner styles of strategizing.

On the seminary campus, vocabulary is an important aspect. Reading comprehension and writing on a graduate level uses a large academic vocabulary in addition to using a register that is not found in proficiency study books. Stahl summarized research and concluded that vocabulary is learned best by seeing and using the words in context.[22] According to neuroscience, if data in the working memory can connect to a purpose, then it will be added to long term-memory. To make the connection between the purpose and new vocabulary, active participation in learning vocabulary is necessary. Active participation is accomplished by 1) looking for relationships between the new vocabulary and the student's background knowledge, 2) seeing how the new vocabulary can be applied to other contexts, 3) examining examples to see if they are using the vocabulary correctly, and 4) making new applications of the vocabulary words in writing and speaking.[23] All of these activities help establish a structure or encoding for the retrieval from long term memory, which does not often occur when vocabulary is memorized (passive activity) as a word or definition in the mother tongue. Brozo & Simpson reiterate that it takes time and many different types of active processing for a student to increase their vocabulary.[24]

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[18]Sandra J. Savignon, "Communication Language Teaching for the Twenty-First Century," in *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, 3rd ed., ed. Marianne Celce-Murcia (USA: Heinle & Heinle Thomson Learning, 2001).

[19]E. Hatch, et. al., "What Case Studies Reveal About System Sequence and Variation in Second Language Acquisition," quoted in Marianne Celce-Murcia and Sharon Hilles, *Techniques and Resources in Teaching Grammar* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Brown.

[22]S. A. Stahl, *Vocabulary Development* (Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books, 1999) quoted in William G. Brozo, and Michele L. Simpson, *Readers, Teachers, Learners: Expanding Literacy Across the Content Areas (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003).*

[23] William G. Brozo and Michele L. Simpson, *Readers, Teachers, Learners: Expanding Literacy Across the Content Areas (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003).*

[24]Ibid.

Curriculum Design

Curriculum design is based on meeting the needs of student by providing good content (vocabulary) and language (grammar and reading, writing, speaking, and listening strategies) goals with quality materials that will help the student be competent in the new language.

Published ESL curriculum is readily available, but to meet the needs of the of seminary students, a specialized curriculum must be designed to expose students to a rich, meaningful, and comprehensible language[25] that gives reinforcement for the vocabulary needed for graduate theological study. Tomlinson also emphasized the active enrollment in both the affective and cognitive domains through exercises that give practice in the skills needed for success in what the student will be doing is important in curriculum development.[26] In the seminary setting, that would be ministry and Bible-related activities.

Increasing comprehension and critical thinking skills is vital for seminary students. The curriculum must include readings in areas that have a purpose for the ministry and is of interest to the students. The principles that must be remembered are summarized by Brozo & Simpson: 1) recalling prior knowledge, 2) summarizing and organizing the text, 3) thinking critically (analyzing and evaluating) about the text and then creating personal responses, 4) being aware of thinking (metacognition), and 5) using reading and learning strategies to comprehend and construct ways of using the information in the future.[27]

Writing skills are often the most difficult tasks for students and should relate to activities that will be required in graduate level courses and in their future ministry. Speaking, also a creative language skills, does not need to be grammatically perfect to be comprehensible, whereas writing at the graduate level requires a much higher level of production. Learners need to be critical thinkers and active problem solvers[28] to be able to achieve this production skill.

Authentic texts can be simplified (using restricted vocabularies and simplified grammar) or elaborated (adding word definitions and word to show clear relationships between phrases). Long shares that the elaborated versions help in comprehension like the simplified, but there is improved acquisition of new vocabulary and increased language complexity.[29] Language curriculum should embrace the principle that learning is best when complete and genuine texts offer sources for students to read and respond to in writing, as well as in speaking, and listening.[30] The meaningful texts should be used to integrate all four language skills so students

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[25]Tomlinson.
[26]Ibid.
[27]Brozo & Simpson.
[28]Ibid.
[29]Long.
[30]Brozo & Simpson.

will have full, functional communication skills in their ministry. This focus on ministry related topics will motive the student which aids in developing fluency.[31]

If scheduling demands separate classes for different skills, such as a reading/writing and a separate speaking/listening course, Evans, et. al., stress that the curriculum cohesive in that classes have materials and lessons that contribute to and build upon each other and stable in that the curriculum is planned, purposeful, and carefully reviewed.[32]

Assessments (proficiency, placement, diagnosis, and achievement) are vital to this design according to Brown.[33] Formative assessment, first introduced by British researchers Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam in 1998 is a different paradigm of assessment and can be utilized in the language learning classroom.[34] Popham indicates that formative assessment's key difference is that the feedback from the assessment (not necessarily an exam) during instruction gives information to the student and teacher for adapting the content and the method of delivery to meet the needs of the student.[35]

In summary, the needs of the students should be met with a curriculum design that will give skills and strategies in language learning to be communicatively competent through the use of authentic texts and tasks in all four areas of language. Curriculum should include grammar skills and vocabulary comprehension to support the development of language competency.

Methodology and Data

The data was drawn from the proficiency scores recorded by the registrar from June 2010 through June 2012. All student scores were used that did not earn 500 (PBT TOEFL equivalency) or greater on their initial proficiency exam. The initial and the final scores after one semester of English language study were used. Some students would have two or three sets of scores, depending on the length of time they were in language training. Pre- and post- exam data for summer school were not included, because the course length differs with the regular semester.

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[31]Ibid.

[32]Norman W. Evans, K. James Hartshorn, and Neil J. Anderson, "A Principles Approach to Content-based Materials Development for Reading," in *English Language Teaching Materials: Theory and Practice*, ed. Nigel Harwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[33]James Dean Brown, *The Elements of Language Curriculum: A Systematic Approach to Program Development* (Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1995).

[34]P. Black and D. Wiliam, "Assessment and Classroom Learning," *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy, and Practice* 5 (1), 7-73, quoted in W. James Popham, *Transformative Assessment* (Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008).

[35] W. James Popham, *Transformative Assessment* (Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008).

This descriptive statistical study of the students (June 2010-June 2012) will be based on the difference between the initial and ending score for each semester. The data will be analyzed to identify the minimum initial score that is needed at the beginning of the semester to have a 68% probability in achieving 500 or greater after one semester of English language study.

A sub-sample of this population, students who have already earned a proficiency score of at least 500, will be analyzed to see if there is any relationship with the length of time needed for earning 500 and the initial proficiency score. It is an assumption of the researcher that the length of time used for the period between school years (summer school) will equal a value of 0.5.

Students may or may not have had language classes, but the length of time to process the language is a factor necessary for correctly interpreting the results. Excel 2010 will be used to calculate the strength of correlation between the initial score and the number of semesters of language training.

The data from the population shows that the lowest proficiency score was 323 and the highest initial score was 494 (see Table 1). The median (446) is the best reflection of the students that are studied. The mean is affected by the low score of 323 which is not typical (outlier). The mode (480) reflects that more students earned this score, but on a continuum of 1-594 this does not have any impact on the interpretation of the data. The count of 51 is the number of exam score pairs (final – initial) within a time frame of one semester.

The change is the difference of the initial and the final score. Scores do not always increase, with a decrease of -15 occurring more often than any other value. It is important for students to understand that it is not abnormal to earn a lower score on the subsequent test. The mean (8) is the average difference and the standard deviation is 26.4 (see Table 1), which means that students have 68% chance of earning a minimum of 500 in one semester if they have an initial score of 474 or greater.

Table 1. Average Change After One Semester of Language Training

(Score Equivalent to TOEFL PBT)

n=51	Initial	After	Change
Lowest	323	358	---
Highest	494	534	---
Mean	439	447	8

Median	446	446	3.5
Mode	480	433	-15
Standard Deviation			26.4

The mean and the mode reflect that often students score less on the proficiency exam the second time they take it. There are two potential causes of a lower score. First, the proficiency test is not the same each time. Between June 2010 and November 2011, there was one semester that a sample TOEFL exam was given instead of the two proficiency exams designed for APNTS. Therefore, the scores cannot provide a perfect correlation to the number of semesters. This may have allowed three students to achieve a 500 without the second semester of English. Second, students who have been on campus for only one semester have high expectations of increasing their score. Under financial and time pressure along with the desire to begin their graduate program, last minute memorization and study with too little rest overtake the student, resulting in less ability to think clearly on the exam.

The data in Table 2 is from the sample of students (15) who have already earned a 500 on the proficiency exam and have been involved in the language learning courses. The median (453) is higher than the population, which is reasonable since these students have achieved a score of 500. The population includes those that have not been successful and may have left after one or more semesters of language learning classes without reaching 500. The average length (mean) of language study is 2 semesters and the median final score is 508. The length of 2 semesters is consistent with the data from Table 1 that 26.4 points is the standard deviation for one semester of study. Standard deviation means that a score has a 68% probability to increase or decrease by a maximum of 26. The difference of the median (453) of the initial score and median (508) of the final score is 55 which indicates that most students will need to have two semesters of language classes. The problem is that approximately half of the students arrive with scores less than 453 and still expect to finish language training in one or two semesters.

Table 2. Data of Students Enrolled in English Program

June 2010 - June 2012

Students Acquiring Minimum of 500 (TOEFL PBT Equivalency)

	Initial Score	# of Semesters	GPA 4.0 (Cumulative)	Final Score
n=15	483	1	4.00	534

480	2.5	3.09	560
480	2	2.95	495
478	2	2.71	503
473	2.5	2.60	535
473	2	2.49	503
470	2	3.15	503
453	1	2.87	508
450	2.5	3.01	518
444	1.5	3.26	543
433	1.5	3.35	498
415	1	2.90	525
414	1.5	2.00	493
410	1.5	3.32	518
323	1.5	2.00	488
Mean	445	2	2.91	515
Median	453	1	2.95	508
Mode	480	1	2.00	503

The data in Table 3 shows that there is a weak positive correlation ($r=0.378$), meaning that the lower the score the less number of semesters it will be needed to achieve a score of 500. This weak correlation may seem inconsistent with the prior data results. The low sample size is one factor for this error. Also, the value of .5 for the summer session may not reflect the true numerical value. Finally, the initial scores may not reflect the true proficiency level due to a variable of student test-taking skills of a proficiency exam.

Table 3. Correlation of Initial Scores to #
Semester of Language Training

	Initial Scores	# Semesters
Initial Scores	1	
# Semesters	0.378	1

Summary

Data indicate that students often come to the seminary with language skills that are too low to be able to achieve the score of 500 or greater on the proficiency exam in the time limitation of two semesters. Some students come with expectations that they can quickly learn English when they are in the Philippines. They do not understand the process of acquiring a second language. Under the excitement of God's leading or even with just the drive to get more education, they don't understand the processes needed to accomplish the goal. They become discouraged and disillusioned about how long it will take before they can take graduate level courses in their area of interest. English becomes a hurdle, something to be jumped over or pushed out of their way, so they can do what God has called them to do.

Based on the literature and empirical observations in the language classes there are five major reasons why students struggle. These reasons can be categorized by looking at the cognitive, affective, and physical domains of life. Cognitively, 1) the initial skills are low, 2) a lack of literacy skills in the first language due. Affectively, 3) financial stress and the change of culture, 4) motivation is hampered by the struggle of balancing ministerial and family obligations with attendance, 5) cross-cultural expectations and perception of the role of teacher and student. Physically, 6) students do not understand the purpose of homework and the curriculum design.

Cognitively, from the research data, it shows that students with low scores do not have a very high probability of increasing their scores more than 8 (mean) and 26 (S.D.). Students need to have realistic goals of the time it will take to be fluent in English. The analytical, evaluating, and synthesizing (creating) aspects are very important in increasing the fluency in a language from the mid-400s upward. These skills are vital in graduate school. So, it is very important for students to develop these skills, not just for the sake of passing the proficiency exam, but for the academic rigors of seminary education. Unfortunately, students want to learn how to take the exam more than wanting to learn the cognitive skills needed to be successful graduate level seminarians. A professor is obligated to prepare students to be able to achieve the desired scores

and yet has the responsibility to develop the strategies and skills needed to get the most out of classes, so that they will be effectively prepared for the ministry.

Affectively, students need to understand the role of culture shock in their lives. Acknowledgement of what is happening in their emotional and social lives helps to relieve the stress. Ways of coping with the stress should be given. Those working with students must be encouragers and motivators on this very difficult journey of learning. The student must be able to relax and trust those in the classroom so that they can become free to try new language skills.

Physically, students need to understand how language learning occurs in the brain. Learning a second language may use different learning strategies than they have used in their home country. The student must understand how the brain functions to understand why rote memorization alone is not effective for language learning. Students need opportunities for physical exercise and good nutrition that aids in healthy brains as well as stress relief.

An educational model at APNTS should have the following characteristics to address the needs of the students, guiding them to develop communicative skills to pass the proficiency exam in a reasonable length of time and to become successful graduate students.

Curriculum Content

Authentic materials will be used for meaningful learning. Materials should be difficult enough to challenge students to develop skills of listening and reading academic material, and to be able to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize into speaking and writing production. The content of language learning classes will address tasks required of seminary students. An array of topics will be covered during the two semesters: Old Testament / archaeology, New Testament, theology, Christian thought / apologetics, missions / anthropology, pastoral topics / counseling / leadership, and Christian education. Assignments should be designed to actively engage students in applying, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing. Strategies, not just facts and rules should be explained and demonstrated by the teacher. In addition to theological specific words, an intensive study of words that are used in all areas of academics is imperative.

Course Framework

A daily class (Monday-Friday) focusing on productive and receptive communication skills should be offered. If a student must take a third semester, the classes may be repeated. If the student's proficiency level was low in the beginning, the student would not have been able to comprehend and master the material during the first semester; therefore repetition of the material is beneficial to the student. The classroom atmosphere must be a safe and relaxed environment that challenges the students cognitively. Students need to understand the importance of consistent class attendance and involvement in the assignments as part of the process of language learning.

Teaching Methodology

A communicative language methodology should be used. Language is acquired through meaningful activities in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Cognitive strategies will be taught and practiced to help students be successful in their graduate studies. A methodology should be used to guide the student to develop communicative competence, not just enough skills to earn a proficiency exam score of 500.

Conclusion

The English Department has the responsibility to provide language learning courses that will provide opportunity for students to develop communication competence in a reasonable length of time to fully utilize the scholarship funds and the resources of the student to maximum efficiency. The proposed educational model will help students recognize strategies that they need to learn, the academic institution will recognize problems and seek solutions, and the distribution of the scholarship funds to students learning English will be based on active student participation in the language learning classes.

Recommendations for further research and curriculum development include 1) follow-up action research to evaluate the effectiveness of this educational model on the amount of increase in the proficiency scores over a semester, 2) development of an assessment for communicative competency in all areas needed in the EFL seminary setting, and 3) an academic solution for students in remote areas to improve their communicative competency before they arrive at the seminary.

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