



American TESOL  
Institute

## **Practical Cases in TESOL - Panama**

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## Introduction

This publication is a description of my experiences as a TESOL instructor in Panama between the years 2002-2004. In this text I compare two different institutional models with which I had the opportunity to work; my aim is to present some actions from the field, in the specific context of the Republic of Panama around the time legislation was passed to make the teaching of English, at all levels, a national goal in this country.

This work does not address the question of how prepared was the country to carry out such policy or what has been the impact of implementing the law to this date. Some of these concerns are addressed in a separate work that has to do with the history of the English language in the country.

The main focus here is on classroom practices in two different institutional settings with the hope that the two cases can be compared to some TESOL theories for discussions, and exchanges between theory and practice. This is, therefore, only a narrative of my personal experiences in a specific context; it is not a scientific research from which any definite conclusions can be drawn; it serves basically as an exercise to stimulate teachers working in countries where English is not the main language to present their experiences for comparisons with TESOL theories, as it should be, for the benefit of the ultimate consumers of TESOL services- the L2 learners worldwide.

The period chosen for this narrative is important because it shows the shifts in the Panamanian elite thinking shortly after the country received the Panama Canal and when the US soldiers in the former Canal Zone had left the country. At that time Panamanians were uncertain about the country's economic future; they were seeking new ways for replacing the significant amount of financial resources that for decades the US residents of the Canal Zone had supplied to the Panamanian economy.

Even the once nationalist thinking against the use of English in the country gave way to policies of openly embracing English as an option for the country's economic survival. It was in this context that a national debate emerged in Panama about the teaching and use of English in the country. President Dr. Arnulfo Arias, had adopted policies against the use of English and other foreign languages during the early 1940s in order to consolidate the privileged position of Spanish; however, ironically it was his widow that in her capacity as President of the Republic in the year 2003, signed into law the dispositions to increase the use of English in Panama. Today, all private and public elementary and high schools are compelled by law 2 of 14 January 2003 to teach English in Panama.

## Program 1

This program took place at the School of Public Administration of the University of Panama main campus in Panama City. The curriculum and core materials were provided by the institution, but I had complete freedom for planning lessons and for choosing additional materials and audiovisual aids, including the use of a Language lab.

Students at central campus, in Panama City, were mostly seeking to obtain a certificate for complying with work requirements at the government's Controller's office. Most of the students already had college degrees. The training program offered them the opportunity for selecting from several type of courses including: computer systems, finance and accounting, psychology and English. The students were aware that taking all three levels of English courses would give them more points for progressing at their jobs.

Often I supplemented the courses with additional materials by showing sections of my own VCRs that related to the grammatical points of the core materials provided by the institution. This was done to introduce some variety to the rigid system based on the textbook script. In addition, I had the logistical support of staff for reproduction or photocopies of the material that I could introduced from other sources. Nevertheless, I was aware of the limitations of introducing more materials for reinforcement, given the institutional need to complete the assignments in the core textbook on time.

The core textbook had been prepared in the United States, and it included different types of music for various periods, as well as cultural and historical references including numerous colloquial phrases and idiomatic expressions that are typical of the United States. This textbook apparently had been selected to give a picture of American English, with the aim of attracting more students interested in learning about the main US language and culture.

The text's structure included an introduction, objectives, vocabulary, grammar points, topics development, activities for reinforcement of main points, and questions to assess the understanding of materials. Generally, I stood in front of the class, proceeded to explain the learning objectives, described classroom procedure to make the lessons more interesting, and played the tapes for listening activities.

After exercises to help familiarization and pronunciation of the words, I implemented sessions of oral reading and made formative assessments to reinforce or correct pronunciation. At the end of each paragraph, or earlier if there was something to clarify, I provided additional explanations on the board, including alternate grammatical forms to express the same ideas, as well as meaning in contexts and comparisons to the Panamanian culture. The explanations were given in English, and in some occasions I resorted to Spanish to aid students' understanding.

The teacher allowed the use of bilingual dictionaries when necessary to assist students; corrections were made only when they could have an impact

on the meaning or when students requested. In these cases the teacher took opportunity to explain points of syntax and morphology with emphasis on the homophones and words with different meanings according to the context. Using the English Lab was helpful since it allowed the teacher to stop the tape at key points for emphasizing pronunciation and doing explanations on the chalkboard. These activities served to illustrate the significance of each grammar structure and different uses in context.

Class size frequently consisted of between 15 to 25 students for the beginning level. Most beginners' motivation took place from curiosity about taking English courses out of the regular school environment with its extended grammar rules. However, the situation for intermediate and advance levels appeared quite different.

Some students felt that by the end of the first level, they already had gained enough English to have at least an elemental form of communication in the language. Since they had to pay for their courses, postponing higher levels courses until months later represented a common conduct ; a practice that, obviously, reduced their ability to build on, practice, and apply newly acquired knowledge, or consolidate friendships and social interactions with their companions and teachers.

At the same time, there was also another English teacher working with this program. Many students would end up taking courses according to the available teacher for each level. Consequently, class size for intermediate and

advance levels generally turned out somewhat smaller, about 10 to 15 students.

Unfortunately, my students and I only interacted during class since they worked at day and the program was not set up for online communications. All classes were delivered in a face- to- face environment. Students and the teacher based relations on their status as professionals. This relationship carries great significance in the Panamanian culture. Classes frequently developed at night, but sometimes also during day time on Saturdays, when as government officials most of these students don't have to work.

Students with greater motivation for learning preferred this more teacher – student interactive schedule for exchanging cultural information that could lead to their success as potential visitors to the United States. Being a native or culturally assimilated to the US culture is, therefore, an important attribute for meeting the needs of this kind of students; that is, cultural topics (a form of English for Specific Purposes) had been combined with the teaching of general English through the use of textual features and the teachers' own experience to make the class more interesting.

Contrary to the Panamanian government interest in promoting English skills amount these public servants to improve their productivity in an era of Internet connections worldwide, many of these students clearly had a personal agenda; to learn English and aspects of culture, as means for taking graduates studies or vacations in the United States.

Therefore, a TESOL teacher must be prepared to face these realities. Unlike children teaching where it is common for language institutes and school teaching generally follow closely the governments curriculum and teachers' lesson planning must fit within that framework, adult teaching both in General English and English for Specific Purposes is strongly influenced by market factors( students' needs and matching of teachers' background and ability to work with meaningful text accordingly). Furthermore, in these cases, teachers must be aware that lesson planning can take much time, energy and creativity in order to satisfy adult demands particularly when dealing with professionals.

Another lesson that can be extracted from this case( as well as the next case) is that it is not enough to know English to be a good English teacher in other countries. English teachers need to learn as much as possible about the US culture. As an English teacher you will always be an anonymous cultural Ambassador for the country he/ or she comes from, sometimes even through unconscious behaviors, but explicitly with the teaching of language and culture as strongly interrelated topics.

These topical connections are becoming more evident and of practical needs with the extraordinary development of telecommunication and computer systems that make English expression available to masses the world over. In this case, it became necessary to make important distinctions, at times, between Standard written English and forms of spoken English. Students at this age and socioeconomic standing are being exposed to different English

expressions coming for example from the worlds of sports, music, movies and other forms of entertainment through cable television, videos, the Internet and other mediums that may cause confusions.

Further complications may arise in countries like Panama that as an international trade center comes in contact with English speaking people from different parts of the world and diverse regions and backgrounds from the United States. Teachers' explanation of meaning in each situation is of utmost importance for students understanding has was experienced in this case.

Clarifications of meanings play an important role for showing how English expressions are used differently according to the purpose and participants of the communication process. Many students found it difficult to recognize the teacher's explanation that just as with the Spanish language, English words and expressions are used with different meaning for many purposes in different regions, by different type of people, and at different times.

It was not until after the teacher provided the example of Spanish words for the English word "boy" as used by people from different countries. Mexico's (chamaco), Argentina's (pibe) Colombia's and Panama's (pelao), and Puerto Rico's (nene). It seems easy and normal for L2 learners to understand these differences in their LI systems, yet it takes time from them to apply the same reasoning to speakers of English since what this produce is initial confusion and anxiety, especially after the individual has already fixed in his mind a specific meaning for the word or expression.

It is interesting, however, to note that while many researchers consider adults commonly refrain from taking much initiative with questions that may lead to a showing of their awkwardness, in these instances adults learners led the way asking for clarifications even when they were told that an expression is being used as slang in a given context. As professionals with recognized status in their society, dealing with another professional born in the same society but raised abroad this instruction and its authentic use in the foreign context appeared funny to the class. Perhaps, a teacher with a different background faced with the same problem may have faced a different reaction.

## **Program 2**

A second program was implemented at the regional campus of the University of Panama in the city of “La Chorrera”, about thirty miles West of the Panama Canal. In this case, the teacher was completely free to design the curriculum and materials for use in the courses. These students took the courses on a non- credit basis to supplement or improve on their English skills with the purpose of obtaining better grades in their credit courses.

The composition of each class was heterogeneous often with students from careers such as: Bilingual Tourism, Ecological Tourism, English, Nursing, Journalism, Education, Banking, Finance, International Business and

Accounting and Law. Not surprisingly, these had been the main areas of economic activity in Panama that demanded English skills at the time (Since then others areas like port administration, call centers management, logistics management, international trade, public administration and others are also demanding English)

Classes in La Chorrera were taught only on Saturdays. During the week all classrooms remained occupied with the credit courses. Moreover, on Saturdays the teacher was able to choose the classrooms with better environmental conditions and specially decorated for English teaching with works done by the students in credit courses majoring in bilingual tourism and English.

In La Chorrera, however, there was a mix reaction to these courses. For the most part, the younger English teachers took advantage of this teacher's presence to practice their English skills, asked technical questions, borrow books, request lecturers to their classes and to further stimulate their students interest in learning English. On the other hand, the older English teachers took a more conservative approach; they often saw this program as a threat to their position. Nevertheless, the vast majority of students enjoyed the opportunity to learn English with someone from the United States while Management supported the program as a powerful source of revenues for the institution.

In contrast with the well- structured courses in Panama City, La Chorrera had a more flexible format. The teacher provided a syllabus for each

course on the first day of class. There wasn't any specific textbook for the courses. The teacher developed materials according to students' needs, and shared it freely with them. For each class, the teacher prepared a lesson plan and used different materials using as general guide the syllabus. Commercial DVD purchased in Panama and corresponding equipment facilitated by the institution served as audiovisual aids together with extensive use special prepared transparencies and use tape-recorders and the chalkboard constituted the main resources used in this case. (At the time there wasn't an English lab in La Chorrera. )

Often, because of the diversity in students' background and interest, the teacher was able to stimulate interesting exchanges and classroom discussions around the main topics particularly at the intermediate and advance levels where students from English and tourism majors served as leaders and motivators to students of other careers.

There was no pre-requisite at any level and, surprisingly, despite the fact that most students had taken English at high school, English skills were very low at the beginner's level; perhaps at levels equivalent to average native second graders in the US. This situation underscores the significant difference between teaching ESOL in an environment like the United States or another country where English is widely used as compared to teaching English as L2 in countries with other L1 languages. Materials and textbooks developed in the US for use in other parts of the world must be tailored to the needs of these

and realities of these areas. Unfortunately, teachers' education programs in the US frequently must use ESOL based materials as guide. More input and production of local English texts and materials are being needed today in many parts of the world even for the use of training native English speakers in the developed nations. This is an area where TESOL teachers usually have to dedicate much time adapting textbooks and preparing materials. Often some creative products emerge in the field to meet students' needs as the worksheet created by this teacher for use in this case (as we will soon see)

The program had three levels; each with duration of six weeks. The difference in skills between for the first day beginners level and the first day intermediate level was significantly greater than for intermediate and advance levels on the first day of class. This suggests that even with young adults students( in this case between 19 and 22 years old) most significant language learning takes place at the lowest stages of proficiency. Like in the case at Panama City, it seems that other psychological and socio- cultural factors also influence the motivation for learning beyond certain level in countries where English is not necessary for survival and is still view as a luxury item for many, but those making a direct living from the study and use of English, including school children.

Part of the problem seemed to stem from the fact, that many students were compel to take English classes at the secondary level even when they were not ready or interested at that time. That probable wasn't a nice experience

with the English language. Another reason might have been that many students had already forgotten their high school English( without a favorable environment for continual practice) by the time they had spent two or three years in College, particularly for those majors where English was not taught.

The beginner's course focused on reviewing the English alphabet,( which is similar in many ways to that of Spanish) pronunciation rules, ( the most complicated thing for adult Spanish learners of English) The teacher selected English words (also often students provided words being used for learning in the credit English classes for classroom practice.

Following these exercises a review of the parts of speech was done and students were made aware of the similarities with Spanish, including the fact that some words can represent different parts of speech, depending on their function in sentences or phrases. The course also included basic grammar making emphasis, on different sentence patterns and conversations with vocabulary used in class.

Next, students were introduced to nouns and adjectives with similar meaning in both languages. Notes focused on differences related to English neutrality of articles as related to number and gender with nouns and adjectives. This is an important difference between English and Spanish that learners of both languages need to be aware of. For example, the English definite article "the" is used for both feminine and masculine nouns and

adjectives as well as singular and plural forms; in Spanish, articles, nouns and adjectives must correspond in number and gender.

Also, notes point out the different order of descriptive adjectives and nouns in both languages. In Spanish, the noun precedes adjectives while in English the descriptive adjective comes first. Example for English: white house, Spanish: casa blanca. Following these explanations, numerous examples are provided on the chalkboard and drills are done.

Next students were introduced to English auxiliary verbs and their uses. The teacher explained that verbs like “**to be**”, “**to have**” and “**to do**” can play roles as auxiliary verbs and also at the same time as main verbs. Example: How do you do? Practice drills of these verbs followed for the conjugating in different tenses. Then the list was extended to numerous regular verbs frequently used in the content of their studies. Students also learned English contractions using the auxiliary verbs and how to make question as well as negative sentences.

In Panama, some students are knowledgeable in relation to vocabulary because of contact with the English language through visitors and telecommunication systems. Furthermore, even before the English law of the years 2003, all Panamanian students from 7<sup>th</sup> grade and above, including many university careers offered compulsory English classes, and almost all private schools offered English classes from kindergarten.

Also, historically, many Panamanians have had access to English speaking U.S citizens from the former military bases, and U.S. civilians working with the Panama Canal and other commercial activities on the former Canal Zone.

For many other Panamanians English is being their LI Language with dialect of Caribbean origins. There are also a significant amount of Spanish-English cognate words (of similar meaning in both languages).

As a result of this contextual reality the main initial need of many College students in Panama (with significant lexical development in Spanish) is being able to demonstrate competency in areas such as: word order, (syntax), proper pronunciation, and meaning in context.

This teacher soon realized that he could use their knowledge of vocabulary and relatively developed reading skills for use with rules of English syntax to produce a unique worksheet that allowed students to create sentences and even short dialogues after observing some examples by teachers' modeling. This gave rise to what the teacher called **the Malcolm's approach** for teaching English to Hispanics students, high school and above.

The Malcolm approach is based on the use of parts of speech placed in word order format according to numbered columns from left to right on a worksheet, allowing for the combination of dozens of grammatical constructions where each part of speech is also provided its English pronunciation. Verbs are classified in regular and irregular in the present, past

and past participle. Each word is also provided its Spanish translation in order to facilitate student's independent constructions of sentences and dialogues.

The entire purpose and procedure is explained, and several examples are practiced for students' motivation and engagement. Students are instructed to develop their own sentences in class and at home. The instructor assigned sentences and dialogues in the Spanish version for students to follow the worksheet and attempt to create the corresponding English message. In a more advance stage, the teacher simple gave numbers of columns combination for students to develop meaningful sentences and produce the corresponding Spanish meaning.

The final stage consisted in allowing the students to use the worksheet freely, without any help from the instructor in a process where the students will first write in Spanish what they wish to communicate and translate each expression into English. This step takes much more processing and time for students; however, when a student gets to this level, it is an indication that the system is working even if the constructions are the simplest affirmative, interrogative and negative sentences.

The teacher complemented the use of the worksheet with notes to explain each part of speech and the different subdivisions of each as well as examples of when the most appropriate use is call for. Other aspects such as contractions, verb inflection and pronunciation tips worked together with the worksheet. These notes were taped and provided with examples of different

uses of the worksheet to create sentences and dialogues. Students could then acquire the cassettes for listening to the teacher's instructions and examples before doing practice on their own when out of class.

### **Common Aspects of Both Programs**

No initial student or group assessments were carried out before teaching. No prerequisite was required for any course. There were three levels: beginning, intermediate, and advanced English. Staff, took general information from students and placed them in whatever level requested. Formative assessment was constantly done in both cases. However, in La Chorrera the students took advantage of these instances to practice and to carry out conversation outside the classroom.

Both groups had high confidence in the instructor's knowledge due to the perception that someone coming from the United States had to know proper English. The students at La Chorrera considered that the teacher from the United States knew more than their own English teachers. This perception was based on two key reasoning: Like the students in Panama City these students reasoned that the instructor from the United States could better explain phrases, expressions, songs, television programs and other aspects of the US culture than local teachers that could only offer textbooks or online solutions to questions.

Another reason for this preference consisted in the fact the local English teachers, like their students, had been immerse so long in an environment that wasn't helpful for their practice of the English language; therefore, it was conceivable that the lack of practice outside the classroom could affect local teachers' productivity and quality of teaching. Coming from the US, therefore, provided advantages in both cases to the teacher that facilitated classroom activities.

### **Questions**

1. Which group do you think was more motivated for learning? Why?
2. Which group favored more formative assessment? Why?
3. Which group had a more homogeneous need? How could that affect the choice of materials?
4. Which group do you think was more reluctant to participate in classroom conversations?
5. Do you think there were any differences in relation to students' mood and disposition to learn during night classes as compared to Saturday classes? Mention three factors that could produce affect the readiness for learning in the night classes.
6. What psychological and pedagogical advantage does an instructor coming from the United States has in comparison to local instructors?

### **Answers**

1. The group in La Chorrera was more motivated for learning. While the La Chorrera group was intrinsically motivated to learn in order to be better students, the group from Panama City was only taking the courses obtain course certificates to comply with on the job requirements.
2. La Chorrera group also favored more formative assessments. They were more interested in participating in their own self- learning, and formative assessments were viewed as learning opportunities for self- monitoring and corrections for improving performance in the credit courses.
- 3 . The group in Panama City was more homogeneous. Almost all were Professionals; many in the same field(accounting), and they worked at the same institution. Moreover, they were all interested in topics of general English for everyday conversations, unlike the group in La Chorrera that was composed of students from different professions and academic levels whose needs tended to be more closely aligned with those of English for Special needs. In he later case materials had to be better tailored and vocabulary of technical words was frequently part of the classes.
4. Students in Panama City were more reluctant to participate in classroom discussions; due to their professional status and older age these students did not feel comfortable making mistakes in public. Students in La Chorrera were ‘professional students’; many came from tourism and English courses where L2 making mistakes was almost a daily routine

that seemed funny. They were also younger students, more willing to take classroom risks for learning.

5. Yes, environmental factors can affect students' mood. Night students that work during the day may have problems of fatigue, anxiety to get home, transportation problems and many other factors that can affect their attention and concentration. This can often cause problems for some job- training classes offered at late hours whether on site or at other locations. Moreover, teachers themselves may consciously or unconsciously transmitted these same issues and behaviors to their students. Saturday classes on the other hand, represented a more relaxed environment leading to more effective learning.

6. There are several advantages and disadvantages for teacher coming from the US in relation to locally trained English teachers.

**Advantages:**

1. The teacher from the US can easier relate to the cultural references in textbooks, materials and curriculums designed in the United States which many local institutions may think is superior materials for the goals they seek.
2. Students may have more confidence and trust due to higher expectations for a native English speaker or someone already assimilated to the US culture.

**Disadvantages:**

1. May face hostile attitudes from some locally trained teachers.

2. May have some initial problems coping with institutional and environmental restrictions.

### **Assignments**

- 1) Comment on and relate to these readings the following words from Seidlholder (2001): “As individuals we project our identity through the way we speak”.
- 2) Describe what teaching method or approach was at the core of developments in the case at Panama City and how did it fit the needs of these students?
- 3) What difficulties can you foresee from these reading in areas related to syllabus design, lesson planning and classroom management in the case at Panama City?
- 4) Explain what method was at the core of the program at La Chorrera and how did it fit in the needs of those students?
- 5) Michael McCarthy explains in his analysis of discourse that “spontaneous talk between equals does not develop in a predictable way” Contrast the implications for both groups, explaining in which case more talk developed and why?
- 6) (Brian Tomlinson p. 67) asks “Do learners need a course book? What learning experience did you extract from these two cases in relation to the above questions? (hint: what advantage and disadvantage did students and the teacher faced in each case)

- 7) Donald Freeman (p.74) mentions an issue that experts have been concern with; that is, how participants and settings can influence or even shape what is taught and learned in teacher education. Do you think these issues may have relation to these two cases? Explain your answer with some key factors.
- 8) Thomas Scovel (p. 81-82) indicates that 'when provided with data from top-down factors subjects' ability to comprehend increased significantly'. Mention key factors of this type that you think helped the students in Panama City with comprehension in their courses. Explain how.
- 9) Scovel (p.83) remind us that 'non-native speakers often self-monitor by guessing or creatively forming their own rule'. How does this apply to both cases?
- 10) David Numan (p. 89) explanation helps us to understand that the comprehensible input hypothesis formulated by Krashen indicates that 'conscious learning focuses and grammatical rules and subconscious learning is gained through the communication of meaning.' How did this hypothesis apply to both cases?
- 11) According to Agnes Lam (p.95) researchers have established the term 'additive bilingualism' for those bilinguals that develop positive attitudes to their native languages and themselves, and if the bilinguals develop negative attitudes toward their own languages it is called 'subtractive bilingualism'. What attitude do you think was developed in each case? Why?

- 12) Anger Lam (p.98) expresses that bilingual teachers and learners can work together to make appropriate language choices according to situations, Did this happen in any of these two cases? Give an example.
- 13) Sandra Silberstein (p.104) explains that students need to develop a critical understanding how the same language can be spoken differently by diverse speakers; also the same speaker can change language style to serve different audiences. For which case do you think this statement had major explications? Why?
- 14) Leo Van Lier (p. 161) reminds us that L2 learners regularly have misconceptions about the target language due to similarities with their L1 or the context in which they learned words. In which case do you think this situation showed up most?
- 15) 15) Dave and Jane Willis (p. 173 inform us that “task-based language learning involves the specification not of a sequence of language items, but of a sequence of communicative tasks to be carried out in the target language”. In other words individuals can use creative ways of communicating meaning to achieve tasks without having to be concerned about grammatical rules. Do you think any of these cases was based on this approach? Explain your answer, and indicate what problems you think could arise with the use of this method in relation to the standardization of language for the expansion of international trade.

## Answers to Assignments

- 1) **Answer:** students preferred to take courses with the teacher because of their perception that his US accent seems more appropriate than that of the local teachers. Students believe that gaining U.S accent would project a better image of themselves in the Panamanian society.
  
- 2) **Answer:** Audio-lingual method because of the strong emphasis on the use of the language labs, focus on reading for correctness and class pauses for corrections of pronunciation and short drills for reinforcements. After the students read and pronunciation practiced carried out the teacher wrote other expression on the chalkboard that had similar meanings and additional explanation were provided (note: each student already had copies of the core materials so the emphasis here was on reading and correct pronunciation. The tapes used in the language lab helped reproduce the U.S accent. What was of most importance to these students was the need to professionally “speak like Americans” in order to upgrade their already respectably status in the Panamanian society.
  
- 3) **Answer:** Time management can become a problem. Teacher and students have a syllabus and scheduled time for covering all the text and materials in each session according to institutional requirements; however, too many pauses for improving pronunciation according to

students needs can affect the teacher's ability to complete the program as mandated. Moreover, the teacher's lesson planning may focus on aspects of reading comprehension following the lead of the core textbook. Yet, too many pauses for explanation and drills related to pronunciation aspects while satisfying students desires may at the same time affect effective comprehension. The teacher needs to have experience and skill in managing this situation and exercise a balanced approach.

- 4) **Answer:** The grammar-translation method. This was possible because I had proficiency in all four language skills in both English and Spanish. The method fit into these students because they were more interested spelling, and other aspects of writing together with vocabulary and discourse in the context of different disciplines as help for their credit courses, and future professional activities.
- 5) **Answer:** The method and materials used at la Chorrera stimulated more talk in the classroom and also between students out of class. As the **Malcolm Method** was introduced in the beginners and intermediate levels, it stimulated more experimentation and talk. On the other hand, the more structured test and method used in Panama city restricted the discourse in many ways because of the instructional mandate to comply with schedules and core texts; the interaction between students and the teacher was greater in the case of la Chorrera due to more time available, and other instructional-environmental factors.

McCarthy p.52 also indicates that “cognitive approaches to text analysis emphasize what readers bring to the text”. Again, the materials used in Panama City were foreign to the students. Although these students could associate some facts with their prior knowledge as highly educated people, more direct engagement with text was observed with La Chorrera group because the text that had been specially prepared for their level of understanding and needs. Furthermore, the teaching approach in this case and students learning and gaps from the credit courses stimulated more use of their prior knowledge for application, practice, self- monitoring and corrections to improve on fluency and comprehension.

6) **Answer:** The use of text book in the case of Panama City provided the following:

**Advantages for the teacher:**

- ✓ Did not have to spend as much time and money in materials preparation.
- ✓ Assisted in preparing syllabus and lesson plans.
- ✓ Provided guidelines and suggestions for the implementation of classroom activities and evaluation
- ✓ Assisted in limiting students’ departure from main topics.

**Disadvantages for the teacher:**

- ✓ Need to agree with the educational goals and philosophy of textbook.

- ✓ Limit the kind of additional materials that the teacher can use to those in line with the textbook.
- ✓ Teacher does not have enough freedom to create and adapt according to the teacher's style and preferences.

### **Students Needs**

Teacher needs to understand all the cultural context and uses that goes with each learning activity.

### **Advantages for students:**

- ✓ Students can see the overall picture and how each part fit in the process
- ✓ Students can read and prepare in advance
- ✓ Students can make use of other metacognitive strategies that textbooks presents as aid for reading.
- ✓ Students can select parts or sections to focus on according to personal interest.

Teacher-prepared materials in the case of La Chorrera the disadvantage to the teacher was the great cost in time and money for preparing the materials for each class.

Teacher had to have great classroom observation and note taking skills, and continual extra-classroom communication with students in order to continuously prepare materials that relate to students' needs and development.

7) **Answer:** Yes. One key factor was the differences in institutional setting. Teacher and students had more autonomy in La Chorrera.

This opportunity translated into greater flexibility and creativity for classroom activities.

- Students in la Chorrera participated more actively because they were intrinsically motivated. They really wanted to learn because they viewed learning as necessary for success in their careers. On the other hand, students in Panama City wanted only the certificates to show that they had complied with work related requirements.
- Environmental factors: Most classes in Panama City took place at night when many students seemed to have low energy and concerned with transportation and family issues as opposed to classes in La Chorrera that only took place on Saturdays when special classrooms became accessible and students had more available time for practice.

8) **Answer:** The key factor in this case was the use of a specifically design text for the courses. Students recalled on their background to figure out pictures, illustrations, charts, titles, headings summaries , reading in context and clues from the teacher that assisted in guessing and eventually comprehending the materials and classes.

9) **Answer:** In both cases the students practiced self-monitoring. Students in Panama City after listening to the tapes in paragraphs or smaller chunks were asked to read out loud the same passage. They frequently would mumble, stop, and look at the teacher, smile and attempt to self-

correct during readings or conversations. Interestingly, in this context, usually, other students will not intervene; they typically would refrain from what could be interpreted as “embarrassing another professional”. The instructor had to take all responsibility for corrections when these students seemed unable to self-correct themselves.

By contrast, in La Chorrera with the use of the **Malcolm’s** worksheet, students creatively attempted to develop numerous sentences and even short dialogues with friends in the classroom. They would often self-monitor and other students would also intervene to help before the teacher. This environment was more open, creative and even funny leading to significant classroom interaction and learning.

Occasionally, however, the teacher intervened when the situation became too complicated for the students. The teacher would ask what is the original message attempted (in Spanish). The student may have attempted to produce speech instantly without any mental planning in either language as the teacher was able to verify in many instances, especially among intermediate level students.

However, once prompted to explain (in Spanish) the content of the attempted English message, these students would perfectly articulate a message in their LI language. Nevertheless, at this point they would already done some mental adjustments and often the new message is a different version of what originally attempted; sometimes the student may explicitly asked to reformulate the original message to fit better to

the context or dialogue especially when viewing body language of other participants or when trying to get more options with the same meaning or to make comparisons with the original thought in both languages.

These are great opportunities for developing fluent speakers. Almost always other students would ask for slight variations of the dialogues and the English translations and meaning. With appropriate scaffolding, the teacher would progressively have the students develop each option by writing the dialogue first in Spanish on the chalkboard as a reminder of the sequence and communicative intent.

In some instances beyond the class level or for variation of the approach, the teacher provided the English translations (with different options) for the same meaning. The students were then asked to guess the meaning of the answers or dialogue and provide it in Spanish to check on their comprehension. Once understanding is clear, repetition of the English structure and writing of the English version on the chalkboard significantly helps reinforce the learning. At this point the teacher focused on aspects related to pronunciation and spelling.

- 10) **Answer:** In the case of Panama City, text features such as illustrations, unit goals, definitions and other helped students understand meaning together with the teacher's explanations of cultural aspects. Students learned grammatical points only after vocabulary was explained, lessons objectives and general overview provided, tapes played

for listening and oral reading took place. Only then grammatical points related to the lesson surfaced as incidental topics.

In the case of La Chorrera, grammar teaching played a more important role since the method used was based on parts of speech and word order or syntactic constructions. However, the teacher provided meaning in context and translations based on meaning. Furthermore, since much of the content was English for Special purposes oriented, the teacher explained special uses with professional jargon not contemplated in ordinary grammar texts. Students were able to learn technical vocabulary; however most learning was still based on grammatical rules.

- 11) **Answer:** In both cases additive bilingualism developed. The main reason is because Spanish remained the main language; that is, the language of preference in society. English was and continue to being taught and learned for special uses. In this context, it is difficult for people to put aside the main language. Moreover, the teacher served as role model since his positive attitude towards his native Spanish transmitted the value of that language even when learning English. Nevertheless, the teacher many times made reference to the negative attitude among many Hispanics in the US that strive to hide their identity by abandoning the use of Spanish.

However, since the English language can express social status and power in many instances, some bilingual individuals visiting the country or the upper class on occasion exhibit negative behaviors when surrounded by

Spanish monolinguals. The interest with which both groups received explanations in Spanish, nevertheless, is to some extent an indication of positive bilingualism in class. It is important to note that the teacher's conversations in English with the young English teachers in La Chorrera should only be interpreted as an interest on their part to take advantage of the opportunity to practice with someone closer to the US accent; that is, for professional development , not a form of subtractive bilingualism in this context.

- 12)       **Answer:**     Yes, this type of interaction occurred in both cases. Classes in Panama City represented the clearest example of this situation in practice. Giving the older age and higher cognitive development (more experienced learners and their professional status (many had visited the United States or came in contact with its culture through other readings), the teacher followed the strong cultural orientation of the textbook, adding his experiences with anecdotes as many students also offered their own experience in different situations, giving more life to the core text.

In the case of La Chorrera the more grammar based approach came under scrutiny and appeared funny, at times, in the intermediate and advance levels when idiomatic expressions, colloquial phrases, slangs and other forms of English constructions were analyzed.

- 13)       **Answer:**     The group in La Chorrera. Out of class they would watch popular videos and listen to songs containing slangs and other English

language uses different than Standard English; then, once in class the teacher would be approached with numerous questions about the phrases. These students also found it difficult to comprehend that in a country so large as the U.S with immigrants from different parts of the world, many language uses and varieties could coexist.

**The** Students in Panama City, on the other hand, had a stronger background and with the use of a textbook focusing on cultural aspects of the US, it was much easier for these students to understand the socio-cultural differences in the US.

**14) Answer:** In the case of La Chorrera because of the method used that allowed for more students' creativity. Students frequently used false cognates transfer, phonetic and speech patterns from Spanish to English, as well as literal translation from Spanish to English consciously and unconsciously during the process of creating new sentences and dialogues with the use of the numbered worksheet and the instructions for its use.

**15) Answer:** Neither case had task-base as a central approach. Both cases used language form or grammar as the central element to guide learning; the students in Panama City had a core textbook with its vocabulary and grammatical constructions to practice using audio-lingual methods and special equipment. On the other hand, the students in La Chorrera had more freedom to create sentences on dialogues in the classroom; nevertheless, the system was also based on

grammatical rules, with word orders or syntactic rules at the heart of the method.

TESOL teachings in the international context requires the development of the four basic language skills using Standard English in order to facilitate comparisons and likeness among different English dialects used within and between nations. Therefore, these uses of various creative communicative systems with little or no standard rules as reference may complicate communications among different people, thus delaying expansion of international trade and global exchange of ideas.

## **Bibliography**

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