



# ASOCOPI newsletter

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ASOCOPI - Calle 25B No. 31A-32 1er piso. Bogotá, Colombia - Tel/Fax (571) 244 4167 e-mail: asocopi@yahoo.com - www.asocopi.org

## From the President

■ Melba Libia Cárdenas B.

Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede Bogotá

A cordial welcome to ASOCOPI's 43<sup>rd</sup> annual conference. This time, we can get together in Tunja thanks to the commitment of many friends and English language teaching (ELT) agencies. Tunja, well known for its Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC) and its tradition in pre and in-service language teachers' education, opens its doors to historical monuments and moments of our country as well as to one of the most important schools of languages which has led professorship for primary, secondary and university levels.

First of all, I should acknowledge the valuable contributions of the following institutions whose support has been vital in running this event: ASOCOPI members and attendees, as well as the UPTC and its Language School and organizing committee, led by professors Aleida Ariza, John Jairo Viáfara, Bertha Ramos, Jahir Aguirre, and Yolanda Samacá.

Our gratitude to the ELT and teacher education program administrators who have supported teachers to attend the conference; the universities and schools who have sent their proposals to this conference; the American Embassy who has steadily sponsored us with the ELT Forum publication and a guest speaker; the VIF Program, which offers working experiences for our teachers to work in the United States; and

the publishing houses who support ASOCOPI and give us the chance to have access to a variety of materials.

The efforts of these organizations and academics coincide with the commitment of attendees –teachers, program coordinators, teacher researchers, pre-service teachers, publishers, ELT agencies, the members of our Board of Directors and our office staff. All of us are fully committed to examining issues concerning materials in our area and to updating our professional field.

The topic for this year, "ELT Materials: Possibilities and Challenges for the Classroom", is the framework to examine aspects concerning circumstances that have to do with decisions we make when we evaluate, design, adapt, or adopt materials to fit particular needs, educational realities or contexts and learners' profiles. As we can see, addressing the issue of ELT materials goes beyond examining published materials. It implies talking to people who are familiar with the production of materials. It also implies analyzing what we do to overcome difficulties due to lack of sources, examining what others have found while doing research, confronting what colleagues have found as a result of rigorous reflections, or getting acquainted with experiences gained by teachers and publishers when innovating in the classroom.

Plenary sessions, workshops, papers, research reports, innovations and reflections scheduled in the program of our event will surely give us the chance to get more insight on the topic of ELT within a framework of respect for different viewpoints.

*Hope you enjoy this year's conference  
and let us all look forward to continue  
working together toward common goals!*

# From the Editor

■ Álvaro H. Quintero Polo

Universidad Distrital Francisco Jose de Caldas  
ASOCOPI Treasurer and Newsletter Editor in Chief



## UPTC and its School of Languages: The Origin of ASOCOPI

The region of Boyacá, known for its lands full of a relaxing green, its historical and beautiful sceneries, is the area where we find Tunja, and in Tunja we find the Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC), the university where this year's ASOCOPI Conference takes place. The UPTC is home to one widely recognized school of languages in Colombia which has generated academic tradition for over fifty years and is also originally the place where the whole idea of the *Asociación Colombiana de Profesores de Inglés* was conceived by Professor Northan in 1965.

In the appealing campus of the UPTC, teachers, researchers, publishers and student-teachers will gather around the theme of "ELT materials: Possibilities and Challenges for the

Classroom." In this Newsletter, we arranged to include, besides the notes from three professors, the academic program and some useful information about the Conference for your reference and as a complement to the Conference official program. The program includes eight plenary sessions, forty-seven concurrent sessions and two panels. This good number of academic presentations is representative of the initiatives of our associates across the Colombian territory.

I would like to close this brief note by inviting every one of our associates to enjoy the academic sessions by reflecting, sharing and discussing about all the dimensions - social, cultural, political, economical - related to ELT materials in classrooms of schools in Colombia.

## ASOCOPI Mission Statement

- Improve the practice of English language teaching.
- Strengthen the sense of identity of language teachers through membership in a professional organization.
- Promote the exchange of ideas, resources, information, and experiences between language teachers on a national level as well as at an international level.
- Promote high levels of education and professional development of university students, in the field of foreign language teaching.
- Provide opportunities of continued professional development of teachers.
- Encourage research in the area of foreign language teaching and learning.
- Provide a forum for the introduction and exchange of new ideas and practices and for the production of educational material.
- Encourage a high level of education and professionalism among its members.
- Provide a consultative and advisory road in the development of educational innovations, English for Special Purposes, Applied Linguistics, Material Development, and Academic Programs at the primary, secondary and university levels.

# ELT Directory

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carlos.villegas@norma.com  
www.normatextos.com, www.greenwich-elt.com

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flozano@urosario.edu.co  
www.urosario.edu.co

## VIF Program

Kevin Smith  
PO Box 896 – Centro Colón. San José, Costa Rica  
Phone: 506-257-6732 - Fax: 506-257-7597  
ksmith@vifprogram.com  
www.vifprogram.com

## errata

In the 2008 July issue of the Newsletter on page 6 we omitted the name of Professor Jahir Aguirre Morales as co-author of the article "The Teachers' Role in an Autonomous Learning Setting". We present our sincere apologies to Professor Aguirre. The corrected title is as follows: "The Teachers' Role in an Autonomous Learning Setting" by Bertha Ramos Holguín and Jahir Aguirre Morales, Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia.

Also in the 2008 July issue of the Newsletter on page 12 the title says "Direccions to arrive in Tunja". The corrected title is "Directions to arrive in Tunja".

**43rd ASOCOPI Annual Conference**  
**ELT Materials: Possibilities and Challenges for the Classroom**  
**October 9 - 12, 2008, UPTC, Tunja**

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

**Thursday, October 9**

9.00 am - 4.00 pm	<b>Registration</b> - ASOCOPI Table		
5.00 - 5.30 pm	<b>* Opening Ceremony and Keynote Speech</b> "ELT Materials: Possibilities and Challenges for the Classroom"	Melba Libia Cárdenas	Universidad Nacional de Colombia - Bogotá
5.30 - 6.30 pm	<b>* Plenary Session 1</b> Constructivism and Authentically Communicative Performances as "Materials" for Foreign Language Learning	Claudia Ordoñez	Universidad Nacional de Colombia - Bogotá
6.30 - 7.00 pm	Opening Cocktail		

**Friday, October 10**

8.30 - 9.30 am	<b>* Plenary Session 2</b> Teachers and Students' Talk around EFL Materials: Discourses of Masculinities and Femininities in the EFL Classroom	Harold Castañeda-Peña	Universidad Javeriana Bogotá	
9.40 - 10.40 am	<b>Concurrent Sessions 1</b>			
Type	Title	Room	Presenter/s	Institution
D	Unit Design Combining The English Discoveries Software and the Eclectic Approach. An Experience in a Rural Secondary School	218	Claudia Parada Yanet Stella Espitia	UPTC ITA de Paipa
D	Blended Learning Materials	219	Jairo López	Universidad Pedagógica Nacional
L	Selecting and Evaluating Textbooks: A Cultural Matter	218A	Sandra Ximena Bonilla	Universidad de la Salle
L	Videos in Pedagogy: A World to be Discovered	216	Ana Milena Morales Yaneth Martínez	UPTC
RR	The Language Learning Experiences from an Intercultural Perspective: A Possible and Challenging Way to Build ELT Materials for the Classroom	214	Jairo Soto	Universidad del Atlántico
RR	Can the Use of Multimedia Material Contribute to Change Learners' Beliefs toward the English Language?: A Case Study	217	Consuelo Cedano	Universidad de Ibagué
W	Adapting Materials from the Internet for a Language Class/Workshop	C.L.	Claudia Nieto	Universidad Nacional de Colombia - Sede Bogotá
C	Exchange Teacher Program to the US	T.F.	Cielo David Guerrero Erika Marcela Hosman	AFS Program
C	Teaching with a Twist	215	M. Consuelo Velasco	Distribuidora y Editora Richmond
10.40 - 11.00 am	Coffee Break			
11.00 am - 12.00 m	<b>* Plenary Session 3</b> Shaping the Way We Teach English	Federico Arteaga	US Embassy	
12.00 m - 2.00 pm	Lunch Break			
2.00 - 3.00 pm	<b>Concurrent Sessions 2</b>			
Type	Title	Room	Presenter/s	Institution
A	What Teachers Should Know and Do When Becoming Tutors of Electronic Environments	217	M.Eugenia López	Universidad Nacional de Colombia - Sede Bogotá

\* Place: Teatro Fausto (Video conference: Sala de proyecciones & Auditorio Rafael Azula).

T.F. (Teatro Fausto); C.L. Computer Lab. Type of presentation: A: Academic; L: Lecture; RR: Research Report; W: Workshop; C: Commercial.

D	Beyond English: A Creative Radio Program to Implement in EFL Classrooms	215	María Teresa Esteban Ana Milena Morales	UPTC
L	Creating Materials: Challenging the Possibilities	219	Angela Bailey Lourdes Rey	Universidad del Norte
L	Rural Schools and EFL Materials: An Issue to Reflect Upon	216	Germán Alexis Acuña Carmen M. Hernández	Colegio Integrado E.F. ITA Guavatá
RR	Ethnic Ideologies in EFL Textbooks: The Colombian Context	218	Gina Delgado García	Universidad de La Salle
W	Creative, Dynamic ELT Materials: A Key to Motivating EFL Learners	204	Larry Lynch	U. Santiago de Cali
RR	Improving Student's Reading Skills through the Use of the WFR Activities	214	Tatiana Mikhailova	Universidad Industrial de Santander
W	Integrating Skills through the Application of Authentic Materials	218A	Mónica Castañeda	Universidad Libre
3.10 - 4.10 pm	<b>* Plenary Session 4</b> The ELT Textbook: A Pass to Fantasy Land?		Carmen H. Guerrero	Universidad Distrital
4.10 - 4.30 pm	Coffee Break			
4.30 - 5.30 pm	<b>* Panel 1</b> ELT Materials: Possibilities and Challenges for the Classroom			
5.30 - 6.30 pm	Cultural Activity			

## Saturday, October 11

8.30 - 9.30 am <b>Concurrent Sessions 3</b>				
Type	Title	Room	Presenter/s	Institution
D	Video-Listening Activities in the ESL Classroom: The Pedagogical and Technical Side of them	204	Liliana Gil	Col. Trinidad del Monte
L	Improvement of the Professional Development of the Pre-service Teachers of the Extension Courses at Universidad Libre in Bogotá	215	Elba Consuelo León	Universidad Libre
RR	Can Use of Multimedia Material Contribute to Change Learners' Beliefs toward the English Language?: A Case Study (R)	218A	Consuelo Cedano	Universidad de Ibagué
RR	Independent Work Material Design Principles: Main Implications from a Research Project on Peer Tutoring in the Modern Language Program at UPTC	219	Aleida Ariza John Jairo Viáfara	UPTC
RR	An Exploratory Study on Teachers' Beliefs about Bilingualism and Bilingual Education: Realities and Challenges	217	Claudia Torres Jaramillo	Universidad Distrital
RR	Improving Students' Reading Skills through the Use of the WFR Activities	214	Tatiana Mikhailova	U. Industrial de Santander
W	Teaching More than Writing	218	Lucía Jarrín	U. de Las Américas
W	Shaping the Way We Teach English: Successful Classroom Practices around the World	T.F.	Federico Arteaga	US Embassy
W	Project Work: A Path to Enhance Autonomous, Reflective and Critical Human Beings	216	Nancy Carvajal	UPTC
9.40 - 10.40 am	<b>* Plenary Session 5</b> Adapting the Materials We Work With: Overcoming Fatigue		Nick Perkins	Pearson Longman
10.40 - 11.00 am	Coffee Break			
11.00 am - 12.00 m <b>Concurrent Sessions 4</b>				
Type	Title	Room	Presenter/s	Institution
D	Use of New Technologies for Developing Teaching Materials in English	204	Jorge H. Muñoz Jorge Eduardo Pineda	Universidad de Antioquia
D	Exploring Language Online Courses	216	Lisbeth Suguey Rojas Sandra Yannet Silva	UPTC

\* Place: Teatro Fausto (Video conference: Sala de proyecciones & Auditorio Rafael Azula).

T.F. (Teatro Fausto); C.L. Computer Lab. Type of presentation: A: Academic; L: Lecture; RR: Research Report; W: Workshop; C: Commercial.

L	English Clubs: Organization, Activities and Materials to Keep them Alive	217	Johanna Ramírez Javier Rojas	Centro Colombo Americano, Bogotá
L	Dictionaries as Teaching-learning Materials: Do They Contain Ideological Biases?	219	José Aldemar Álvarez	Universidad de La Salle
RR	Trainee Teachers' Sensitivity towards Cultural, Political and Social Values Embedded in Texts during the Development of Literature Circles	218	Victor Javier Moreno	Universidad Distrital
RR	Riding the Double Track of the Language Learning Express	214	Fernando Silva	UPTC
RR	Developing Academic Writing Based on the Anglo-American Paradigm: What a Private Colombian University Setting Reveals	215	Sanjay Nanwani	Universidad Externado de Colombia
W	ELT Materials Design: The Key to Fostering Effective Teaching and Learning Settings	220	Astrid Núñez María Fernanda Téllez	Universidad Externado de Colombia
W	Video as a Tool to Motivate the English Learning Process	218A	Claudia Yanive Prieto	U. Incca de Colombia
A	Incorporating the Development of Critical Thinking through ELT Materials	T.F	Costas Pexos	The Anglo Publishing House
12.00 m - 2.00 pm	Lunch Break			
2.00 - 3.00 pm	* <b>Plenary Session 6</b> The Role of Reflective, Informed and Collaborative In-house Material Design in Students' Learning and Teacher Development		Esperanza Vera	Universidad Pedagógica Nacional
3.10 - 4.10 pm	<b>Concurrent Sessions 5</b>			
Type	Title	Room	Presenter/s	Institution
D	INTELLIGENT VERBS: A Software for Learning Phrasal Verbs	C.L.	Victor Felipe Prada Carlos Arturo Valdiri	Colegio Los Angeles
L	Interweaving Elements in the Design of a Curricular Unit	216	Dora Cecilia López Adriana Sáenz	Colegio F. de P. Santander Colegio G. León Valencia
L	Designing a Book from the Inside out: From Theory to Practice	218	Bertha Ramos Jahir Aguirre	UPTC
RR	Hearing Students' Voices through Written Narrations of Life Experiences	219	Sandra Santana Yeimy León	Universidad Distrital F. José de Caldas
RR	Material Design for Students to Become Autonomous Learners	218A	Imelda Zorro Delsy Baracaldo	Universidad Libre
RR	Materials Assessment: A Shared Responsibility among Teachers and Students	215	Claudia Y. Becerra	Secretaría de Educación Distrital, Bogotá
W	The Toy Library: A Tool to Share Children's English Knowledge of EFL Classrooms	204	Diana C. Jaimes Ana Milena Morales	UPTC
W	Creative, Dynamic ELT Materials: A Key to Motivating EFL Learners	217	Larry Lynch	U. Santiago de Cali
W	Culture as Difference: Being Aware of the Boundaries Helps Bridge the Gap	220	Jorge Turizo	Universidad del Norte
C	What Do We Value? Success!	T.F	Nick Perkins	Pearson Longman
C	Become an International Teacher with the VIF Program	T.F.	Gloria Bohórquez	VIF
C	Become an International Teacher with the VIF Program	T.F.	Gloria Bohórquez	VIF
4.10 - 4.30 pm	Coffee Break			
4.30 - 6.00 pm	<b>General Assembly</b>			
6.00 - 7.00 pm	Cultural Activity			

## Sunday, October 12

8.30 - 9.30 am	* <b>Plenary Session 7</b> Developing Materials in Task-based Teaching and Learning English through Communication		Jose David Herazo	Greenwich Universidad de Córdoba
9.30 - 10.30 am	* <b>Plenary Session 8</b> The Design of ALEX Virtual Courses: Challenges and Implications for ELT		Magda Rodríguez Carlos Aldana Melba Libia Cárdenas	Universidad Nacional de Colombia - Sede Bogotá
10.30 - 11.00 am	Coffee Break			
11.00 - 11.45 am	* <b>Panel 2</b> ELT Materials: Possibilities and Challenges for the Classroom			
11.45 am - 12.30 m	Closing Ceremony			

\* Place: Teatro Fausto (Video conference: Sala de proyecciones & Auditorio Rafael Azula).

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# Educational commercialism: is it overtaking EFL in Colombia?

■ José Aldemar Álvarez  
Universidad de La Salle

During the last decade teachers, institutions, administrators and the Colombian academic community in general have witnessed the unveiling of offers of educational materials.

Due to the implementation of the program "Colombia Bilingüe", corporate publishers have strengthened their efforts in order to capture the recent and promising market that English has opened in our country. This trend aligns with what Crystal (1997) as well as Graddol (2006) have posited that ELT business has become one of the major growth industries around the world in the past half century. The concern that this short reflective paper is based on has to do with how commercialism in foreign language teaching can blur the main purpose of pedagogical processes and the role of educational materials. This paper is an invitation to inquire and reflect on the Colombian foreign language curriculum and the possible utilitarian purposes of English that might be gaining more relevance due to commercial views.

In agreement with McLaren (2003), I consider that the concept of curriculum should be understood as a form of cultural politics, which means that *"social, cultural, political and economic dimensions are the primary categories for understanding contemporary schooling"* (p.214). In this view, school and educational processes in general are underlain, among other things, by economic agendas established by corporate titans. Thus, "education is an industry ripe for development that seems to have permeated the consciousness of every segment of the corporate world" (Hinchey, 2004, p. 111).

The teaching and learning of English around the world show that professional organizations; international cultural agencies; testing, publishing and research institutions are considerably influenced by commercial interests. This poses the question regarding to what extent are the international corporations participating in programs like "Colombia Bilingüe", or other programs related to ELT, really committed to the development of the educational process of a particular country like ours or whether their only concern lies in their commercial interest.

By looking at the Colombian case, it is conspicuous to observe that commercial interests seem to be exerting an impact on FL educational processes. It is common to see text publishing conglomerates offering teacher proof training programs, promoting the traditional one-size-fits-all methodological model and commercializing, educational materials like textbooks and software. The industry of textbooks has especially achieved great degree of development and there exists a plethora of textbook series that intend to account for all learners' needs. Along with textbooks there has been a wide development in the area of standardized tests: "Many of the producers of classroom materials are also in the testing business -which offers them the ability to test specifically on their own curricular products, capturing the lucrative testing and material markets with one fell swoop" (Hinchey, p. 96). This is the case of some British and North American corporations that administer examinations in Colombia. They certify language levels according to international standards like the ones proposed by the Common European Framework (CEFR) or ALTE. Not only do these institutions provide the tests, but also the materials (textbooks, manuals) and the courses to get ready to pass the tests.

It is paramount to notice, as asserted by Canagarajah (1999, p. 79), that "There are many institutions and agencies involved in the policy making process. We have to keep in mind that

curricular decisions in post colonial communities are shaped considerably by various state, commercial, and educational agencies at both the center and periphery levels." The participation of experienced international corporate publishers of educational materials or any other foreign corporation should constitute one enriching source for the development of the Colombian curricular process; nevertheless we cannot forget that the voices of the periphery, our voices as claimed by Gonzalez (2007), need to have higher incidence than the voices of the center levels. Decisions about educational materials, testing and linguistic policies in general should emerge from our sociocultural, political and economic agenda.

I would like to bring to an end my commentary by pinpointing Quintero's (2008) position on the role of educational materials, which must be seen as representative of social values rather than commercial values. More than mere artifacts, educational materials embody all that teachers and students employ at a cognitive, emotional and ethical level to achieve a teaching and learning goal. Materials tend to be means to achieve certain purposes but they are not themselves an end. Considering that buying textbooks, softwares, dictionaries, methodology manuals, computers, the Internet and other aids will imminently improve pedagogical processes may constitute a fallacy since teaching and learning go beyond the existence and provision of material tools. In short, it is necessary that we learn to read and question the pedagogical but also the business discourse of publishing corporations. It is through a critical view that teachers can unveil utilitarian and commercial views in ELT which are detrimental to pedagogical processes and the teaching profession.

#### References

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# The Place of Authentic Materials in Language Teaching: A Historical Perspective

■ Edgar Alirio Insuasty  
Universidad Surcolombiana  
edalining@gmail.com

The use of authentic materials in language teaching has strongly been associated with the advent of the so called Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1970s. So it is shown in an overview of approaches and methods made by Nunan (qtd. in Brown 71), adapted by Brown (71) and reproduced by González (103). Larsen-Freeman (132) says that adherents to CLT advocate the use of language materials authentic to native speakers of the target language. However, search for authenticity in language learning can neither be seen as recent as one could imagine today, nor can it be exclusively associated with CLT.

In order to support these claims, this brief literature-review paper is, therefore, intended to unearth the historical background of authentic materials in language teaching.

Several precedents of authenticity in language learning can be traced and dated back to long before the twentieth century. Mishan contends that much of the early language learning and teaching in colonial contexts may be said to have been authentic in spirit, in that the language was usually acquired in non-classroom situations and without specially prepared language materials, via direct contact with native speakers (18). The historical explanation for this is the encounter of civilizations out of the different invasions like the Persian invasion of Greece, the Macedonian conquest of the Persian Empire, the Roman invasion of Britain, among many others. It was precisely in the context of the Roman conquest of Macedonia and Greece that the Greek language was commonly adopted by Roman society and education. Musumeci said that:

"By the beginning of the 3rd century B.C., Greek was the language of prestige and culture among educated and upper-social class Romans, existing alongside Latin in a bilingual society" (627)

Quintilian, a well-known and influential educator in Rome, recommended that children learn Greek first and Latin second, as the latter would be learned in the context of daily life. He claimed that learning derives from instruction; therefore, children should be exposed only to excellent and accurate models of language use through their caregivers and the texts they read. (Howatt 628).

By the Medieval times, it was through Latin that Christianity was spread. This language was taught by means of the "scholastic method" which consisted of breaking down words into their constituent parts. The alphabet had to be learnt prior to reading and memorizing sections of the so called "primers". The materials used at this time were authentic texts like basic prayer books and scripture passages (Mishan 19: Musumeci 629). Augustine, a Church father, claimed that language developed out of a need

to communicate and that he learned his native language by associating sounds and gestures with objects (Howatt 630).

In the 9th-century England, Latin was the international (European) language of communication. According to Pugh (qtd. in Mishan 163) an authentic material approach is said to have been used to spread Latin by means of the translation of books into the vernaculars Old English and Anglo-Saxon. Some of those translations have been attributed to King Alfred himself.

A more liberal implementation of authentic texts in language learning was proposed by Roger Ascham in the mid-16th century (Mishan 19). He developed a "double translation" method, i.e., the target language text was rendered into the mother tongue and then it was re-translated into the target language. Ascham used simple but authentic texts in this rendering process. For Latin teaching purposes, he used texts by Cicero by means of an "inductive approach", whereby readers inferred grammar rules out of the texts.

In reaction to the rote-learning which pervaded the learning of Latin and Greek during the 16th century, Comenius (qtd. in Mishan 21) advocated an "intuitive approach" to language learning based on sensory experience. He said that every language must be learned by practice rather than by rules, especially by reading, repeating, copying, and by written and oral attempt at imitation.

Henry Sweet also used an "inductive approach" as a basis to put forward a theory of language pedagogy in 1899 (Mishan 19). In his theory, he favoured language study by means of connected texts, rather than detached sentences. Sweet advocated that those connected texts made the best context in order for learners to establish and strengthen the

correct associations between words, their contexts and meanings. According to Mishan (19), the arguments that Sweet made for the use of authentic texts at that time have been recaptured in modern teaching practices. This is what Sweet then claimed:

"If we try to make our texts embody certain definite grammatical categories, the texts cease to be natural: they become either trivial, tedious and long-winded, or else they become more or less monstrosities" (qtd. in Mishan 19).

The 20th century was dominated by materials-focused approaches albeit embodying many different theories of language acquisition (Mishan: 20). Teaching methods like the Oral Method, the Situational Approach, the Direct Method and the Audiolingual Method relied on carefully structured materials. According to Howatt, these methods developed a "cult of materials" (26), that is, the authority of the teaching approach resided in the material themselves. Since then, most of the language teachers have been subservient to textbooks as the only source of teaching ideas. Even though the materials used in these teaching methods were not claimed to be authentic, they served the purpose of developing a continuum from form-based approaches to meaning-based approaches in language teaching.

In the second half of the 20th-century, a group of humanistic approaches to language teaching emerged in reaction to the conventional mechanistic teaching methods (Mishan 21). Suggestopedia, Total Physical Response, The Silent Way and Neuro-Linguistic Programming all exploited the whole sensory repertoire of the brain during the language learning experience, instead of getting stuck to the cognitive learning operations. They used the learner's "whole brain" (left and right hemispheres) as a realistic and authentic interaction with input (Mishan 21).

Voice of language teaching tradition still echoes in contemporary practice (Musumeci 634). Whereas Latin learning was encouraged for evangelization purposes (globalization of Christianity) in the Medieval Age and authentic materials like prayers and scripture passages were then used to the effect, English is being likewise spread in the 21st century as the language of another sense of globalization, one having to do with international economic and cultural cooperation or competition. However, today's language learning authenticity is shaped by what is currently at stake in the field, namely, the growing influence of information and

communication technologies (ICTs) (Mishan 25), Whole Language, content-based instruction (Richards & Rodgers 215), task-based language teaching (Richards & Rodgers 237).

The Whole Language Approach has as one of its major principles the use of authentic literature rather than artificial, specially prepared texts and exercises designed to practice individual reading skills (Richards & Rodgers 110). Whole Language Proposals are seen as anti-direct teaching, anti-skills, and anti-materials, assuming that authentic texts are sufficient to support second language learning (Aaron: 127).

Richards & Rodgers contend that Content-Based Instruction (CBI) uses authentic texts as a way to address students' needs (210). It is through written and/or spoken texts students can encounter in the real world that a relevant syllabus can be developed. Real world in this case embraces not only social life but also academic life. In the latter case, CBI favours cross-curricular connections between English and other subject matter like social studies, science, math, or so. Authenticity in this type of instruction arises from the subject matter texts which are like the ones used in native language instruction and the way of accordingly approaching them.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) proponents also favour the use of authentic tasks supported by authentic materials (Richards & Rodgers 237). These materials come from different sources like newspapers, television and internet. The new ICTs are contributing a good stock of authentic materials for language teaching. But the authentic input on its own cannot generate authentic interaction and authentic language learning, unless authentic tasks are strategically designed to exploit the authentic text. By authentic task is meant the sort of things people usually do with the authentic material. For example, newspapers in everyday life are read with different purposes: information, entertainment, etc. Therefore, it would be quite inauthentic to come with English newspapers to the class just to practice some lexical or structural issues.

Underlying the latest approaches to language learning there is a new linguistic assumption, the interactional view of language, which adds weight to authenticity in contemporary language learning. Unlike the structural and functional views of language, "the interactional view" sees language as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance

of social transactions between individuals" (Richards & Rodgers: 21). In this respect, Wilga Rivers suggested that students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages (4); that is, relevant and appealing information for both the speaker and the listener.

To sum up, what the different episodes mentioned throughout this paper reveal is that both authenticity and communicativeness have always been underway in language teaching history. Therefore, these two tenets of human language learning cannot be claimed as the exclusivity of any particular teaching method, regardless of how contemporary or communicational it claims to be. However, the crucial difference between the conventional authenticity and today's authenticity in language teaching seems to lie not in the authentic text itself, but in the authentic task that is carried out with that type of text.

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# The Impact of a Languages Needs Analysis: A Research Initiative

■ Ricardo Bernal

## Introduction

A research initiative highlights the close relationship between the personal, linguistic, academic and professional needs of learners and the design of English programs with its different components (approach, contents, methodology, evaluation and resources). The lack of coherence between students' needs and the components of language programs might be one of the causes of students' low level of involvement in classroom activities as well as of the students' low performance in their professional tasks when using the English language.

It is clear that in addition to the local, national and international challenges, the higher education system of any nation should address the personal, academic and future

professional demands of its students. For this reason, the education of professionals and leaders of the new world order, characterized by the technological and scientific revolution, requires the development of a global vision and a dynamic attitude to become protagonists of the knowledge society. To achieve this mission, our students need to improve their language knowledge and linguistic competence, having in mind the importance of English not only as a second or foreign language, but as a common and international language because this language has become an essential tool for communicating and accessing science, culture and technology today.

## Why carrying out a Needs Analysis?

Besides the previous considerations, the absence of serious studies that support some English programs motivates me to propose a current students' needs analysis project as a point of departure to make academic decisions based on real facts rather than on simple assumptions (Johns, 1991; Knox, 1987; Richterich & Chancerel, 1987; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, 1993; Robinson, 1991; Jordan, 1997; and Richards, 2001). Most of these authors understand the identification of the different actors' needs as an essential requirement in curriculum design and development. Such premise makes me think that the acknowledgement of students' perceptions and expectations when setting up the approaches, goals, contents and materials design might improve their performance and, consequently, their outcomes within a more efficient and meaningful learning atmosphere.

An underlying relationship between collected data about the English language needs of

learners and the program design can be seen in Dudley and Jost (2003). According to them, some key stages and contributions of ESP to language teaching include a careful and extensive needs analysis (Johns, 1991), course and syllabus design, material selection (and production), teaching and learning and evaluation which are not separate but interdependent. Needs analysis is the process of establishing the what and how of a course; evaluation is the process of establishing its effectiveness.

Historically speaking, there has been an evolution in the educational trends and the languages programs have not been an exception. This can be demonstrated if we review the main stress of the teaching-learning process in each specific time. After being centered first on teaching and then on language, in the 80's it was centered on the student, with a philosophy based on his/her own needs (Richards 2001). Needs analysis is "concerned with identifying general and specific language needs that can be addressed in developing goals, objectives and contents in a language program" (Richards & Rodgers 1986, p. 156) and it is just one component of the curriculum framework, which, according to Pufahl *et al.* (2000), "motivates and guides the development of a strategic, coherent, and transparent system of foreign language education" (as cited in Pineda, 2001, p.7). In terms of Oliva (1997), recent curriculum development models integrate the needs specifications as an interrelated stage which should receive feedback continuously (as cited in Pineda, p. 8).

## Research Initiative

The research is divided into the following three stages and each one intends to answer a question:

1. According to the learners' perception, what are their personal, linguistic, academic, and professional English language needs?
2. According to the perception of English teachers, other teachers, academic coordinators, deans, alumni and potential employers, what are the learners' personal, linguistic, academic and professional English language needs?

3. Is the current English program addressing the identified needs?

The first and second stages are mainly exploratory, the third one is descriptive. The first two stages combine elaborate questionnaires and structured interviews. They pretend to collect data on learners' identity, language background, main language and professional skills required.

After the learners' information is analyzed and compared with that of the other interviewees' (English teachers, other teachers, academic coordinators, deans, alumni and potential employers), relevant findings will be considered to "fine tune" the current English program.

### Expected Outcomes

As the teaching task should be coherent with learners' lacks, wants and needs, it must be based on student research. This research initiative contributes to the spread of the investigation culture at languages centers. Furthermore, because reality is not static due to the permanent scientific, cultural, technological and economical changes in the world, a continuous needs analysis of new entrants is suggested and this initiative pretends to be a point of departure to update and take into consideration students' linguistic needs and competence. Consequently, it should enrich the theoretical foundation of English programs by providing teachers and administrators with relevant and useful data in order to implement necessary changes and adjustments, so that the resulting program designs match learners' needs more accurately and make the teaching-learning process more efficient and meaningful for them.

### Pedagogical Implications

One of the purposes of this project is to motivate teachers of languages centers to create and join knowledge communities that support their teaching decisions and actions with research more than with simple assumptions. Needs analysis is considered as a cornerstone of ESP (Dudley & Jost, 2003, p.122) and it opens an important research area that enlightens the teaching-learning process of any language.

The development and implementation of a needs analysis study is crucial for the identification of the members' needs of any educational institution because it provides program designers with useful information to address learners' wants, lacks and interests more objectively. As stated before, a permanent needs analysis is a requirement for any program design if we want to achieve effective outcomes. It helps teachers and administrative staff to recognize and take into account the context variable (Chaudron, 1990). Furthermore, ongoing needs analysis is in favor of meaningful and effective teaching and learning due to the permanent changes learners, teachers and administrators face through time.

To sum up, this research initiative allows us to go from an assumption state to a more objective state by providing us with more reliable information to sustain decisions dealing with the goals, contents, materials and approaches of English programs. Finally, this kind of educational research could serve as a tool to enrich and update other areas of knowledge at university level within the permanent feedback policy of most educational institutions.

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## Sympathy Note

On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, **ANA MERCEDES ROLDÁN** (Asocopi President 1981) passed away in Tunja. On behalf of the affiliates of the Colombian Association of Teachers of English (ASOCOPI), the Board of Directors of the Association would like to express their sympathy to all her relatives, friends and colleagues at the UPTC in Tunja. No word can really bring comfort to you, but rather let sweet memories of your precious wife, mother, friend and colleague and your prayers bless her soul. May you feel the healing touch of every thought that is sent with love and sympathy from the entire ELT community in Colombia. And in this time may treasured memories bring peace, faith, love, knowing that she is safe beginning her journey with our Father in Heaven. She will be remembered by all of us.

# CONVOCATORIA

En cumplimiento del Artículo 9 de los Estatutos de la Asociación Colombiana de Profesores de Inglés (ASOCOPI), la Junta Directiva Nacional se permite convocar a todos los miembros activos, fundadores, correspondientes, honorarios y vitalicios a la Asamblea General Ordinaria para el año 2008, que se llevará a cabo en el marco del 43 Congreso Nacional de la Asociación el día Sábado 11 de octubre de 2008 a las 4:30 p.m. en el Teatro Fausto de la Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, ubicada en la Carretera Central del Norte en la ciudad de Tunja. La agenda será la siguiente:

1. Verificación del Quórum
2. Lectura del Acta de la Asamblea anterior
3. Informes de la Junta Directiva
  - a. Informe del Presidente en representación de la Junta
  - b. Informe de estados financieros y presentación de presupuesto 2009 para aprobación por parte de la Tesorería
4. Actualización Estatutos
5. Elección Junta Directiva 2008 – 2010
6. Asuntos varios

Atentamente solicitamos tener en cuenta los siguientes puntos:

Artículo 7 "Un Asociado que no pudiere concurrir a la Asamblea se podrá hacer representar mediante poder escrito conferido a otro socio activo. Dicho poder deberá entregarse antes de la iniciación de la Asamblea a la secretaria de la Junta Directiva Nacional. Un Asociado no podrá representar a más de dos ausentes."

Toda propuesta que se desee tratar en asuntos varios deberá ser entregada por escrito a la secretaria en forma de moción, antes de iniciada la Asamblea y deberá ser apoyado por lo menos por dos asambleístas para ser considerado en el orden del día.

Las candidaturas para los cargos vacantes deberán registrarse ante la secretaria de la Junta Directiva antes de iniciada la Junta General.

Bogotá, 29 de Septiembre de 2008  
Junta Directiva Nacional

Firmado:  
Melba Libia Cárdenas Beltrán, Presidente  
Gabriel Obando, Vicepresidente



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