

## Best Practice in Using the Teaching of English in Seminaries

### Abstract:

Most seminaries around the world engage in English language learning and teaching. If classes are conducted in English, there is often a struggle to help learners achieve the needed proficiency level. If classes are conducted in other languages, there are usually English as a foreign language classes in the curriculum, and students often have a desire to learn English. In all cases, English learning presents tremendous opportunities for seminaries. Three possibilities will be presented: 1) English learning through content learning (Students learn English through sheltered content courses.) 2) English learning for bi-vocational ministry (Pastors are able to run English preschools or classes in their churches.) 3) English learning as income for the seminary (An English program is run in the seminary, with both missional and financial goals.)

### Warm-up Questions

1. What is the very worst way to configure seminary English classes?
  - a. A two-hour class, once a week
  - b. A one-hour class, twice a week
  - c. An intensive English weekend, once a month
2. Who potentially has the greatest advantage in learning a new language?
  - a. A six-year-old child who moved to a new country and is learning the new language by playing with neighbor children
  - b. A 22-year-old college student who takes a class in a language he is trying to learn
  - c. A sixteen-year-old student in a foreign language classroom
3. What is the most important ingredient for successful language classes?
  - a. Effective course books
  - b. A teacher trained in effective language teaching methods
  - c. A program with a good curriculum

### English Learning through Content Learning

#### Snapshot

Students come into your program with zero English, but by choosing the “English track”, they become highly proficient in English by the time they graduate, four years later. Though their English proficiency will begin to develop during intensive English classes in the first year, after that first year all their English development happens through content courses, for which they receive seminary credit. At first, these courses are in very simplified (“sheltered”) English, taught by teachers who have training in English language development. But by the time students are in their last year, they are able to understand more advanced content in English, and produce a written thesis in English.

*What do you think makes this program successful?*

### Keys to Success

1. A strong \_\_\_\_\_ year of foundational language development. The program must be meaning-focused, not book-focused. This could double as a for-profit English program for the community.
2. A well-planned \_\_\_\_\_, which takes into account the sequencing of courses not only for their content, but also for the kind of \_\_\_\_\_ inherent in the content. The English track curriculum needs to specify not only \_\_\_\_\_ goals, but also \_\_\_\_\_ goals, for each class.
3. Unequivocal buy-in by all \_\_\_\_\_ who teach in the English track. All professors who teach English learners need specialized \_\_\_\_\_ to know how to teach their \_\_\_\_\_ *and* ENGLISH.
4. Usually, in order to accomplish all of the above, the seminary needs to have on staff a \_\_\_\_\_ professional, who has a voice in curricular, training, and hiring decisions.

*What questions do you have?*

### **English Learning for Bi-Vocational Ministry**

#### Snapshot

Your school is in a country where everyone seems to want to learn English. Parents, especially, seek out English learning opportunities for their children. Since many students in your seminary will become bi-vocational pastors, your school provides coursework to prepare pastors to set up English programs in their church buildings or homes. Called the “English Entrepreneur Program”, seminary students must have a foundational level of English to be admitted to the program. Then, they take three courses:

- *Essentials of Language Learning and Teaching*: This course equips students with a foundational understanding about how people learn languages, and how language should be taught. Students will learn basic language teaching methodologies.
- *Ministering through English Teaching*: This course helps seminary students see the ministry potential in English teaching, and learn how to select materials and plan lessons for ministry and language learning effectiveness.
- *Running an English program or Course*: This course teaches the logistics of administration, compliance with local laws and regulations, and curricular planning. Students will design a program and its curriculum in this course.

*What do you think makes this program successful?*

### Keys to Success

1. Having students who are interested in English as a secondary \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Having a strong shared value of \_\_\_\_\_ in the school. This can lead to the understanding that one should *not* just start up an English school with no training (though that is done often), and that a secondary vocation should still be seen as \_\_\_\_\_ in its own right.

3. Having a \_\_\_\_\_ professional who can teach the first two courses, and having someone with good \_\_\_\_\_ knowledge to facilitate the last course.
4. Providing follow-up and \_\_\_\_\_ for pastors who start English ministry programs.

*What questions do you have?*

### **English Learning as Income for the Seminary**

#### Snapshot

People of all ages can be seen coming and going from your campus... people who might not look like seminary students! They are students in your seminary's thriving "English for Life" program. Envisioned first as an English program for seminary students which would also be opened up to other adults in the community, word of the success of the teaching methods used quickly spread. Even though there were many other English programs in town, people flocked to the new English for Life program, in part because it sought to minister to the whole person, even as the English language was learned. Soon, parents in the program wanted English options for their children, so a program for adolescents was born, and then one for children. With 150 students, this English school employs 6 full-time local teachers, and also utilizes short-term English teachers from the U.S. and Canada. Students pay market value for the English classes, and this revenue stream is heartily welcomed in the seminary.

*What do you think makes this program successful?*

#### Keys to Success

1. Having a \_\_\_\_\_ expert head up the creation of the English school, and utilizing methodology that is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ between the head of the English school and the academic leadership of the seminary, so that the \_\_\_\_\_ needs of both are met.
3. Having a \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ working relationship between the seminary and the English school.
4. Maintaining the \_\_\_\_\_ focus of the English school; maintaining the perspective that the English school does not just exist for \_\_\_\_\_, but also for \_\_\_\_\_ in its own right. This involves, among other things, only hiring \_\_\_\_\_ to teach in the English school.
5. Working out the \_\_\_\_\_ agreement between the English school and the seminary, in advance.

*What questions do you have?*