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## MATERIALS TO MOTIVATE ADULT LEARNERS IN AN ESL LITERACY PROGRAMME - THE SINGAPORE EXPERIENCE

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### Abstract

Learner motivation is vital for the success of any instructional programme. In a programme which adopts a largely open-learning-based but partly teacher-fronted approach, the instructional materials developed for such a course have to be motivating. It is generally acknowledged that while "good materials do not teach, they encourage learners to learn." (Hutchinson and Waters 1987).

Developing interesting, interactive materials is not always easy and it becomes even more of a challenge when one has to design materials for a very large population of older workers with no obvious immediate job-specific or learner-specific English language skill needs.

SEAMEO RELC was commissioned by the National Productivity Board, Singapore, to develop comprehensive learning packages comprising video, audio and print materials for two basic literacy courses - called *Easy English* and *Working English* - for use by adult industrial workers in the age range 45 to 55. The courses were based on a flexible system, combining aspects of open learning and traditional approaches to instruction.

In the absence of any specific or specifiable job-related or personal English language skills needs, the RELC team decided to focus on the "learning needs." (Hutchinson and Waters 1987) of the learners and conducted extensive surveys to find out what sort of course and course materials would motivate the older workers and help them improve their literacy skills in English.

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The stages of materials development for the two courses included:

- i. making an assessment of needs;
- ii. evolving a conceptual framework for the courses;
- iii. working out a (largely functional) syllabus for each;
- iv. writing detailed instructional design documents and writing specifications;
- v. developing the prototype for the video, audio and print materials;
- vi. doing an internal evaluation of the materials;
- vii. developing and trialling prototype unit materials;
- viii. producing revised packages for extensive use on the two courses.

The two courses developed by the RELC Project team have already been used by over 5,000 workers and feedback gathered from learners and course instructors through questionnaires and interviews has been encouraging. It is envisaged that the courses will be eventually used by over 250,000 mid-career industrial workers in Singapore.

This paper examines each of the stages indicated above and the rationale for each stage and, in hindsight, suggests some 'Do's and 'Don't's to ELT practioners planning to develop instructional materials for basic literacy courses for older workers in Asia and elsewhere.