

Collaborative Efforts for the Futures of Detainees. The Giligili Correctional Institution Detainees' Literacy Program Teacher Training Workshop Alotau, Milne Bay Province

by Yasuko Nagai

Introduction

The idea of a Detainees' Literacy Program originated with Lance Corporal Sulo, the Officer-in-Charge of the Detainees Reception and Discharge Section. He is from Divinai, a Tawala speaking community, 28km east of Alotau. After graduating from Cameron High School, he joined the Correctional Institutions Service



Author with the staff

(CIS) in 1989 and was posted to Wewak, Sepik Province, for seven years. In 1999, he was transferred to Alotau. In September and October 2002, he had an opportunity to attend a six-week CIS Adult Literacy Training Trainers Workshop in Port Moresby. During the workshop he learned about a participatory method that was new to him. He was impressed with the idea of producing reading materials on the basis of people's interests or current problems in the community, but the workshop did not provide time to put these ideas into practice. After the workshop, he compiled a report and made recommendations to the Giligili Correctional Institution to begin a Detainees' Literacy Program. He also mentioned it to former schoolteacher detainees. However, beginning such a new program was not considered to be the highest priority of the institution at that time.

[Yasuko Nagai joined SIL in 1978. She helped develop the Maiwala Elementary School in the Milne Bay Province of Papua New Guinea. She is currently working as a researcher and consultant in the Academic and National Training Section of LCORE, the language department of SILPNG]

Towards the end of March 2003, S, one of the detainees, wanted to read the Bible. He could speak English but could not read it. So he approached B, one of the former schoolteacher detainees, to teach him to read English. B recommended that S learn to read in Tok Pisin first, so that it would be easier to learn to read English. As S was very keen to learn, he asked for the necessary stationery to be brought to him. On seeing him make steady progress and compile his own Tok Pisin-English dictionary, a few other detainees were also inspired to learn to become literate. So B asked G and A, two other former schoolteacher detainees, to assist him with teaching. As they kept Sulo informed about their inmates' progress in their learning, Sulo waited for an opportune time to propose a Detainees' Literacy Program.

After a six-month period of re-shuffling administrative officers in Giligili, a new Function Officer was appointed to the Detainees' Welfare, Rehabilitation and Project in February 2005. Almost at the same time, B requested that Sulo organise a literacy program for any other detainees who were motivated to become literate. With the approval of the Function Officer, Sulo began to approach various community leaders to form a committee to plan, give advice and monitor the proposed Detainees' Literacy Program. As a result, the first Committee meeting was held in the Giligili Correctional Institution Library on 15 March 2005.

When Sulo went to the local Education Department to seek their assistance, the Officer-in-Charge of adult education could not provide personnel to train teachers or teach detainees. Instead, he sent Sulo to SIL to seek their assistance. Thus, his request was made known through the LCORE Literacy Section. I immediately responded to his request to help facilitate the program, since I was already familiar with the Alotau area from my previous work and a research project (Nagai, 1999, Nagai and Lister, 2004). Not only the local Education Department but also Sulo was very pleased about my possible involvement. Thus, our correspondence began. I explained cheap ways of producing reading materials while teaching. However, he thought, according to the procedure which he learned from the workshop in 2002 (ACCU, 2001), that he had to prepare teaching materials prior to my arrival for a teacher training workshop.

The Materials Production Workshop

The first Materials Production Workshop was held in the library from 10 May to 16 June 2005. It was facilitated by two newly trained elementary school teachers who had been identified by the Education Department as "Trainers of Trainers (TOTs)." As they were teaching in the morning at

their respective elementary schools, the workshop was held only three afternoons per week for six weeks. Besides the three CIS officers and four former teacher detainees, Sulo invited five women to participate in the workshop, so that they would be able to begin a women's literacy program if needed in the future. These women were: a Teacher-in-Charge of the CIS Elementary School, two officers' wives and two other officers' daughters.

It was rather difficult for them to try to produce reading materials for adults on the basis of their elementary school teacher training. As the two TOTs were newly graduated elementary school teachers themselves, they did not have any experience of teaching adults, so the content of the workshop was heavily focused on theories and did not meet the expectation of the participants who wished to learn to teach detainee students. As a result, some of the participants lost interest and motivation to attend the workshop while others persevered and sat through the lectures, wondering how they could put their learning into practice. After the workshop, the four former teacher detainees continued materials production with the artistic inmates, as was instructed by the TOTs. In reality, they felt as if they were on their own, heading nowhere, not knowing what they should do next. They had been led into the mountains far away from the sea when they had wanted to learn how to steer a canoe.

The Initial Teacher Training

I arrived in Alotau on Thursday 11 August and visited Sulo and the Commander at the Giligili Correctional Institution the following day. The commander was extremely appreciative of my coming and was very pleased to be involved in a research project which I initiated. Then, Sulo took me to the library where we made plans for the workshop to commence the following week. Sulo also sent for the four detainee teachers who were soon escorted out of the locked compound and into the library. Each teacher had made one Big Book, one poster, one set of alphabet cards and a syllable chart. They had done an excellent job. However, the materials they produced lacked cohesiveness in themes and levels. I suggested they put them aside as supplementary readers and make simple stories *with* the students using Language Experience Approach (LEA). LEA is a very effective method for teaching not only children but also adults (Nagai, 2004). Although it had been included in the original Elementary School Curriculum, it had not been taught in the recent Certificate of Elementary Training (CET). So the teachers were delighted to have the privilege of learning LEA as a result of being in a correctional institution.

On Monday 15 August, Sulo informed the local Education Department of the commencement of a Teacher Training Workshop, which was a real surprise, or rather, a shock to them. On Tuesday 16, I met with Sulo in the library and made further plans for the workshop. In the morning of Wednesday 17 August the Commander officially opened the workshop in the library. It was dark inside because there was no electricity during the day. There were eight wooden desk-bench units and a large table in the library. In order to create a participatory atmosphere, Sulo and the teachers rearranged them into a semi-circle and removed the large table to make a little space for some activities during the workshop. Since the institutional activities are organised under a strong Christian influence, Sulo suggested we take turns leading devotions.

The participants of the workshop included Sulo and two other officers as well as four former teacher detainees. One elementary trainer from the Education Department attended the initial two days only. The four teachers' backgrounds were as follows:

Name	Age	Teaching Qualification	Teaching & Work Experience
B	45	Primary School Teacher Elementary School Teacher	Grades 2, 4, 5, 6 EP, E1, E2
A	33	Elementary School Teacher	EP, E1
G	28	Elementary School Teacher	EP, E1
T	29	Primary School Teacher	Grade 7 (Science and Maths), agency clerk in a bank, professional singer

(NB. EP = Elementary Preparatory, E1 = Elementary Grade 1, E2 = Elementary Grade 2)

I briefly explained the LEA procedure and how to teach parts of language from a story. Then, we composed a story together based on the event we had just experienced in the library and made it into a chart story¹ (see Appendix 1). On Thursday, we practised reading fluently and dramatised the story. I also explained how to draw out a key phrase to teach a key letter/sound. On Friday, we continued practice teaching parts of language. However because the participants were all literate, it was too easy for them. So I explained that learning to teach was like learning to steer a canoe: it would be useless to learn to steer a canoe in still water but necessary to do

so in a river with a current. As the participants were all skilled at paddling canoes, they understood the necessity of practice teaching in an actual classroom. Hence, Sulo made an arrangement to begin practice teaching from Monday 22 August.

The Language of Instruction

Although English is the lingua franca of Milne Bay Province, Tok Pisin is the official language of the Correctional Institutions. Since all the officers from Milne Bay have served in the New Guinea region, they have all learned to speak Tok Pisin while at the same time mixing in many English words. Officers from the New Guinea region seem to be more comfortable talking with me in Tok Pisin rather than English, while the officers from Milne Bay were more comfortable speaking with me in English. Officers from Milne Bay often switched from English to Tok Pisin and vice versa while speaking among themselves. Most detainees could speak English, but a few from remote areas with poor educational backgrounds could not. Thus, officers hoped that they would learn to communicate better through the literacy program in Tok Pisin. In other words, all the detainee students had to learn to read and write in Tok Pisin while they were still learning to speak it.

Since the students came from many different *tok ples* (mother tongue) groups, I agreed to facilitate a literacy program in Tok Pisin, whose orthography is similar to that of other PNG *tok ples* orthographies. I also initiated the idea of incorporating *tok ples* within the program to help participants appreciate their traditional languages and cultures. For example, they first composed a story together in Tok Pisin. Then, they were encouraged to work together in their own *tok ples* groups when learning a sound/letter in Tok Pisin. They were also encouraged to think of words with the same sound/letter in their *tok ples*. As they wrote words in their own *tok ples* on the blackboard and read them to the rest of the class, *tok ples* was valued and respected as much as Tok Pisin. At the same time, each student wrote a word and drew a picture for it to make a word-picture dictionary in his exercise book. *Tok ples* word-picture charts were also prepared by the teachers and some of the students. More words with pictures were added to the charts as the participants learned a new letter/sound every two weeks.

During the first two weeks of practice teaching, the teachers continued to find it difficult to teach in Tok Pisin. Since they felt more comfortable teaching in English, Sulo agreed that it would be all right for them to mix

English and Tok Pisin while giving instructions, but that they should compose a story in Tok Pisin. It was rather amusing to see both the teachers and students trying to speak and read Tok Pisin, while everyone else in PNG was trying to speak English which is the language of wider communication. Oftentimes, teachers spelled words in English and some of the students added the suffix “-s” to make a Tok Pisin noun plural as in English. One of the teachers taught the students to say ‘tiša’ in Tok Pisin, while they could say ‘teacher’ in English. Every morning after the morning roll call, they were ordered to line up in groups for the various activities of the day. They did not realise that ‘lain’ in Tok Pisin meant a ‘group’. On another occasion, both the teachers and the students were confused with the words, *poret* (forehead) and *pret* (afraid).

There are 16 consonants, 5 vowels and 2 semi-vowels in Tok Pisin. The plan was to teach one letter/sound per fortnight. As they composed a story together based on their experience, the teachers learned to determine which letter/sound should be taught from the story. Then, I helped them make a list of letters/sounds in Tok Pisin according to their positions in the mouth. I also helped them determine which sound/letters could be more useful and easily felt in the mouth, thus would be better to be taught early on. Then, the teachers learned to identify a catch phrase in a story with a letter/sound that occurred frequently in the phrase, especially in the word-initial position. For example, “p” was taught from a phrase: *“Wanpela dok i painim papa bilong em.”*

The Students

Initially 41 detainees were identified as potential students based on their educational backgrounds in the official records that were passed on to CIS from the Police Department. However, we soon discovered that some of the information was unreliable in light of that provided by the teachers. Thus, the number of the students was reduced to half. Then, the teachers also identified some other inmates as potential students, although they were not on the original list. As a result, the number of potential students became 26.

Although I suggested that the teaching staff give a simple screening test, they preferred to stick to a new list of students. In order to pay closer attention to each student, we formed two groups by dividing the list of names in two. In a few days, however, we began to notice that some of the students who had some literacy skills were dominating and intimidating others who did not. The teachers also reported to us that some of the

students complained that they were not receiving more advanced teaching, but could not tell us their names because of their relationship with them. Thus, we decided to give them a dictation test with simple three-letter words in order to separate out those who had no literacy skills.

From the test results, we were able to identify those who had already gained some literacy skills, as well as those who had complained. Three of the ones with literacy skills had been taught by B during the previous few months and nine others had somehow picked up basic literacy skills despite their poor educational backgrounds. In fact, many of them were very bright and quick to learn. Hence, another time of reflection and re-planning became necessary. From the roll book, we also identified four students who were not regular in their attendance: two returned to the class after Sulo had encouraged them to continue, but the other two dropped out. One of them could not see well as a result of severe cataracts on both eyes, and the other had been locked up in the high security unit due to misbehaviour. As a result, the number of the students became 24: fifteen in their 20s and 30s, five in their 40s or 50s and four juveniles. Some of them could not remember their dates of birth and others had forgotten how old they were after being in the institution for some time.

From the third week of practice teaching, we regrouped the students into two levels: 14 emergent literacy learners in Level 1 and 10 others in Level 2. However, after a couple more lessons, we further discovered that some of the Level 2 students were still needing to learn basic phonics skills, while others were almost ready to go on to a Tok Pisin-English bridging class. Since they were highly motivated to learn, the teachers were afraid that they would lose interest in learning, if they were dismissed from the class. The teachers also wondered if those who needed to learn phonics skills should return to the Level 1 group. I suggested that they should be kept together with the others in the Level 2 group.

During the next lesson or two, as they received extra teaching in phonics, those with weak phonics skills in the Level 2 group began to regain confidence not only in the class but also in everyday life in the institution. Furthermore, through rewriting a story from the Level 1 students' perspective (see Appendix 2), the Level 2 students began to develop a more considerate and caring attitude towards the Level 1 students. On 22 September which was my last day with them, I encouraged the Level 2 group to observe the lesson of the Level 1 group. By doing so, they became more than willing and honoured to assist the teachers and their inmates in the Level 1 group.

As we came to know each other better during the three weeks we were together, the students became more open about giving honest information regarding their educational backgrounds, as shown in the following chart:

Number of Students	Grade completed	Reasons for poor educational background
5	NIL, 2, 6	Lack of school fees (One of them attended school without learning much. Additionally, he felt shy about not having a school uniform.)
3	1, 2	Family problems (Parents were divorced; Mother was living away in Moresby, being left with grandparents.)
2	1	Lived too far away from school
5	NIL, 1, 2	Ran away from school and lost interest as a result of an argument with the teacher, beaten by the headmaster, bullied by older boys
4	NIL	Parents and relatives were more concerned about village life than schooling.
2	NIL, 1	Tribal fighting disrupted the operation of the school
1	1	When transferred to another school, he was rejected by the Board of Management due to his age (19)
2	1, 2	More interested in activities outside of school

As I felt it impersonal to call the students 'Level 1' and 'Level 2', towards the end of the fourth week, I suggested they decide on a name for each group. The Level 1 group decided to call themselves *Kumul* (Bird of Paradise) and Level 2 called themselves *Torangau* (Eagle). Calling themselves by these names helped them feel much needed pride and camaraderie, which was evident from their participation in the launching of the program during the fifth week.

Curriculum

The curriculum for the detainee students was developed during the practice teaching period. In this curriculum, we did not aim to teach literacy in order for the detainees to function in a classroom only. Rather, we aimed to teach them to think critically in order for them to become more effective and more cooperative citizens in their communities when discharged.

In contrast to young children, adult learners have a longer attention span and have already acquired knowledge and skills that are necessary in everyday life. Yet, these particular students felt inferior because of their poor educational backgrounds. They also felt guilty for what they had done and the effect it was having on their families. So the curriculum aimed to create a non-threatening atmosphere in which students could enjoy learning together through friendly competitions and games similar to those in elementary schools.

The curriculum also aimed to encourage students to appreciate that learning is fun and meaningful. Both the students and the teachers were encouraged to learn to listen to each other and accept each other's views through the process of composing a story together and making it into a chart story. Later, the story was rewritten in various forms by changing main characters, events, times, perspectives, etc. In order to alter their receptive and self-centred ways of thinking to more reflective and critical ways, the teachers and the students were encouraged to rewrite a story from the other's perspective.

In this curriculum *tok ples* is valued as much as Tok Pisin. The students firstly learn to read fluently and think through a whole meaningful story in Tok Pisin. Then, when they move on to learning parts of language through phonics, they also learn to apply phonics skills in *tok ples*. Later, they learn to read and write in English through a Tok Pisin-English Bridging Program. Through the acquisition of literacy skills, the students are

encouraged to develop better communication skills in various forms in the languages of communication in PNG society.

Practice Teaching

I made a tentative four-week cycle of lesson plans as follows:

- Week 1: composing a story together and reading fluently
- Week 2: understanding parts of language through phonics
- Week 3: rewriting the story and reading fluently
- Week 4: understanding parts of language through phonics

One of the messes was used as the classroom for the literacy class. The grey brick walls and small high windows, together with no lighting during the day, made the room dark. We rearranged the two heavy-duty table-bench units into a V-shape, so that the students could sit closer to the blackboard and the front walls where the chart stories were hung. The teachers also hung alphabet cards on the other walls to make the room look more like a classroom.

During the first two weeks of practice teaching, Sulo negotiated with the institution for the allocation of class time, so that all the students could be involved in other activities. Initially, it was agreed to have one session in the morning and another in the afternoon. Then, it was changed to have two one-hour sessions per morning except every other Wednesday, which was sports day. After dividing the students into two levels, the length of each class was adjusted further during the third week: approximately 70-80 minutes for Level 1 and 45-50 minutes for Level 2.

During the third week of practice teaching, Sulo called a second committee meeting. At the meeting, I was asked to give a report on the current Teacher Training Workshop. I briefly explained the curriculum and lesson plans. I also read one of the LEA stories and rewritten stories. Then, the committee members were invited to visit the classroom in the locked compound. They were amazed to see the semi-dark mess, which they had previously visited, transformed into a bright classroom with chart stories and alphabet cards in Tok Pisin, and word-picture charts in the students' *tok ples*, as well as Big Books and posters that were prepared through the Materials Production Workshop. So they officially recommended that the Giligili Correctional Institution Detainees' Literacy Program be launched on 21 September 2005.

The fourth week was cut short due to the Independence Day long weekend. So the lessons for the fourth week spilled into the fifth week. Further delays were caused by preparations for the launching of the

program. Nevertheless, the teachers and the students were able to complete the last two lessons of the first four-week cycle by the end of the fifth week.

The Official Launching of the Detainees' Literacy Program

The event took place in the sports yard facing the male detainees' compound. After the guests had been escorted to their shelter by the Kilivina dancers, the program began with the National Anthem in Tok Pisin. It was sung in two-part harmony by the teachers and students, together with the CIS Elementary School children. It was followed by the National Pledge and a 'Literacy Song' composed by one of the teachers, both of which were in Tok Pisin. After the entertainment and several speeches, the guests were escorted into the classroom where one of the teachers and the students demonstrated reading one of their chart stories. One student then gave a testimony: he had been rejected all his life, but as a result of attending the literacy class he has now learned to do something worthwhile. As he broke down in tears, we also shed tears of thankfulness. Then, we returned to the shelters for a feast.

The whole event was well organised and coordinated by the officers, their families and the detainees. It began and finished according to schedule. The event was fully documented by a reporter from Conservation International and was featured on EM-TV in PNG.

Reflections and Conclusions

Since I was not familiar with life in the Giligili Correctional Institution, I employed LEA to suit the interests of the detainee students. I also considered that it would be more appropriate for me as a researcher, to work together with the teachers as co-researchers in order to develop a curriculum and teaching strategies through a PAR process. The spiral process of planning, acting, observing, documenting, reflecting and re-planning contributed to the formation of not only a curriculum but also tailored teaching strategies for this particular audience behind bars.

Although none of the officers in the teaching team had been trained as teachers, they caught on to the idea of enjoyable, meaningful ways of teaching emergent literacy learners, especially because they could relate the concepts to their own children. As a result of practice teaching, the three former elementary school teachers discovered that teaching their inmates was similar to teaching children, yet they were adults who had already acquired life skills. One teacher who formerly taught grade 7 was

willing to learn to adjust his linear ways of teaching to more holistic ways in order to help his inmates in their learning. As they were all committed Christians, they prayed earnestly and worked together with humility.

Initially, I suggested to the teaching staff that the same teacher should teach a whole two-week lesson so that he could experience the flow of it while others observed and learned. However, B, who was much older than the other three and with more teaching experience, insisted that everyone take a turn to practice teach. As a result, most teaching staff were not sure of where to pick up in each lesson, especially because each group of students had composed two separate stories. This chaotic practice teaching situation became worse when the students were regrouped into two levels, as B suggested that every teacher should experience teaching both levels. Since the three teachers had not been trained to teach E2, and they were still adjusting to teaching adult learners, they found it difficult to teach two levels alternately. It was like swapping the captain many times between two canoes. So the canoes were unstable and were not going forward smoothly. By this time, everyone was convinced of the need to have the same person learning to steer the canoe throughout a two-week course of lessons, beginning with a whole meaningful story and moving on to parts of language through phonics.

In order to solve the problem, I suggested the three teachers concentrate on teaching Level 1 students, while B taught Level 2 students with my assistance. Since there were 14 students in Level 1 and most of them still needed to learn basic alphabet and phonics skills, I also suggested that each teacher take responsibility for looking after certain students outside of the classroom. As the teachers and the students shared the same dormitories, teachers often reported to us that some students had already copied a chart story or some others were practising a 'say-it-fast' game and wanting to have a set of letter-cards to practise spelling. It is obvious that the strength of this program lay heavily on the highly motivated students and committed teachers.

The officers in the institution were the first persons to witness the positive outcome of the program right from the early stage of practice teaching. Because of the less relevant workshop conducted by the two TOTs in May, the teaching staff members were feeling somewhat lost and apprehensive by the time I arrived in August. Nevertheless, they began to see the benefit of learning by doing. As I helped them to understand the purpose of various teaching strategies, they were able to put them into practice. They also recognised that the detainees' literacy class in Giligili was not like a formal classroom where only the right answers were expected. Rather, it was a

place where every student was accepted and encouraged to participate in all the activities. Furthermore, the students were able to appreciate each other and celebrate each other's achievements.

On my last day at the institution, the teachers reported how the whole atmosphere within their dormitories had been changing, and the behaviour of inmates, not only of the students but also of others, was changing. One student expressed a desire to become a counsellor when discharged. Another gained the confidence to share for the first time at the Bible study in a dormitory. They used to think that 'literacy' was about reading and writing only, but now they have become fully aware of the fact that it is about regaining confidence and building character. The time of teaching and learning was also a time of developing friendships. For the first three weeks or so, I was not sure how safe I might be among 230 male detainees in the locked compound, especially when all three officers had to leave me alone for a few minutes among the students and the teachers. However, as we got to know each other, we began to develop respect and trust between us. By the end of the fourth week, I knew that no detainee would ever harm me, but would rather protect me.

During the next few months, the teachers and the students will continue their literacy classes. They are working together to achieve well in order to progress to the next level of learning, especially through a Tok Pisin-English Bridging Program. An inservice course for a bridging programme is planned for mid-2006 around the time the current students will be graduating from their classes.

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Appendix 1: LEA Story

Wanpela Dok Painim Papa

Page 1: Dispela moning, mipela sindaun insait long hausukuk.

Page 2: Wanpela dok i painim papa bilong em, na em i laik kam insait.

Page 3: Tisa em i luksave na em i tok, “Ssss!” Papa bilong dok i tok, “Go!”

Page 4: Tasol dok i les long go. Olsem na em i ronim em wantaim ston.

Appendix 2: LEA Story and Rewritten Story

Nambawan De Bilong Skul

Page 1: Long Mande, mipela hamamas long go long skul.

Page 2: Insait long klasrum, tisa tokim mipela long wokim stori. Tisa i raitim het long Tok Ingris.

Page 3: Kopol Sulo i tok, “Hei, raitim long Tok Pisin!” Tisa i tok, “Sori, sori.”

Page 4: Na mipela olgeta i lap olsem, “Hahahahaha!”

Mi Pret Long Skul

Page 1: Long Mande, mi tingting planti long go long skul.

Page 2: Insait long klasrum, tisa i toktok long Tok Pisin, tasol mi no klia.

Page 3: Mi sindaun isi wantaim pret.

Page 4: No gut mi kranki na olgeta man bai lap olsem, “Hahahaha!”