

ELT Professional Development:

Evaluating the Effectiveness of *Teacher Development Interactive*[™]

This paper summarizes the findings of two studies:

- *Evaluation of Teacher Development Interactive* by Cotos, Silva, and Chapelle (2009)
- *The Impact of Teacher Development Interactive (TDI) on Teachers' Conceptualization of Language Teaching Methodology* by Díaz and Fernández (2010)



*TDI is an online
professional development
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Teacher Development Interactive (TDI)

TDI is an online professional development program offering international certification for English teachers. Published by Pearson, TDI currently includes six individual courses or modules.

Recently, two independent, third party studies were conducted to assess TDI's effectiveness. In late 2009, Dr. Carol A. Chapelle and colleagues at Iowa State University evaluated the impact of TDI on 20 teachers from Bolivia and Peru. In the second study compiled in early 2010, Dr. Gabriel Díaz from the National Administration of Public Education in Montevideo, Uruguay, and Dr. Daniel Fernández from the Universidad del Litoral in Santa Fé, Argentina, evaluated the experience of 21 teachers from Uruguay and Argentina. Applying different testing methodologies on teachers taking two different TDI modules, each study renders a unique set of data. Viewed together, these data make a quantifiable, compelling argument confirming the effectiveness of TDI. This paper combines the key findings contained in these studies.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the TDI module Fundamentals of English Language Teaching, Chapelle et al. used the widely accepted CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) evaluation conceptual framework developed by Chapelle (2001). Specifically developed for evaluating language learning materials, CALL criteria capture important qualities that one would expect to find in both language and teacher education materials. Using both quantitative and qualitative experimental methods, researchers measured course outcomes, context, and the learning process. Since learning includes content and language, "content" was added to language learning potential in this study. Researchers measured each teacher's TDI experience with respect to six ideal criteria:

- 1 content and language learning potential**
- 2 meaning focus**
- 3 learner fit**
- 4 impact**
- 5 authenticity**
- 6 practicality**

For each of these six criteria, the impact of TDI on 20 teachers was determined by analyzing their responses to a combination of four-point Likert scale surveys, quizzes, questions, online discussions, 108 written assignments, and a final exam. A summary of the results obtained for each criterion is presented below.

1

Content and Language Learning Potential: Does TDI provide adequate learning opportunities to beneficially focus on course content and language?

Investigators first questioned if teachers believed that TDI allowed them to focus on course content and the language necessary to understand the content. Teachers were asked to rate TDI's learning potential in thirteen categories. They also rated the TDI module overall. Teachers' ratings were determined by analyzing their responses to a four-point Likert scale survey. The results of the survey, shown in Chart 1, are dramatic. Universally, teachers valued the learning potential of TDI. As the top line shows, in their assessment of the overall course, 95% of the teachers agreed that there is significant learning potential in every TDI component.

Qualitatively, in their e-mail responses to questions, teachers said that TDI made them more aware of how they teach, what they could do in their classes, and why they teach the way they do.

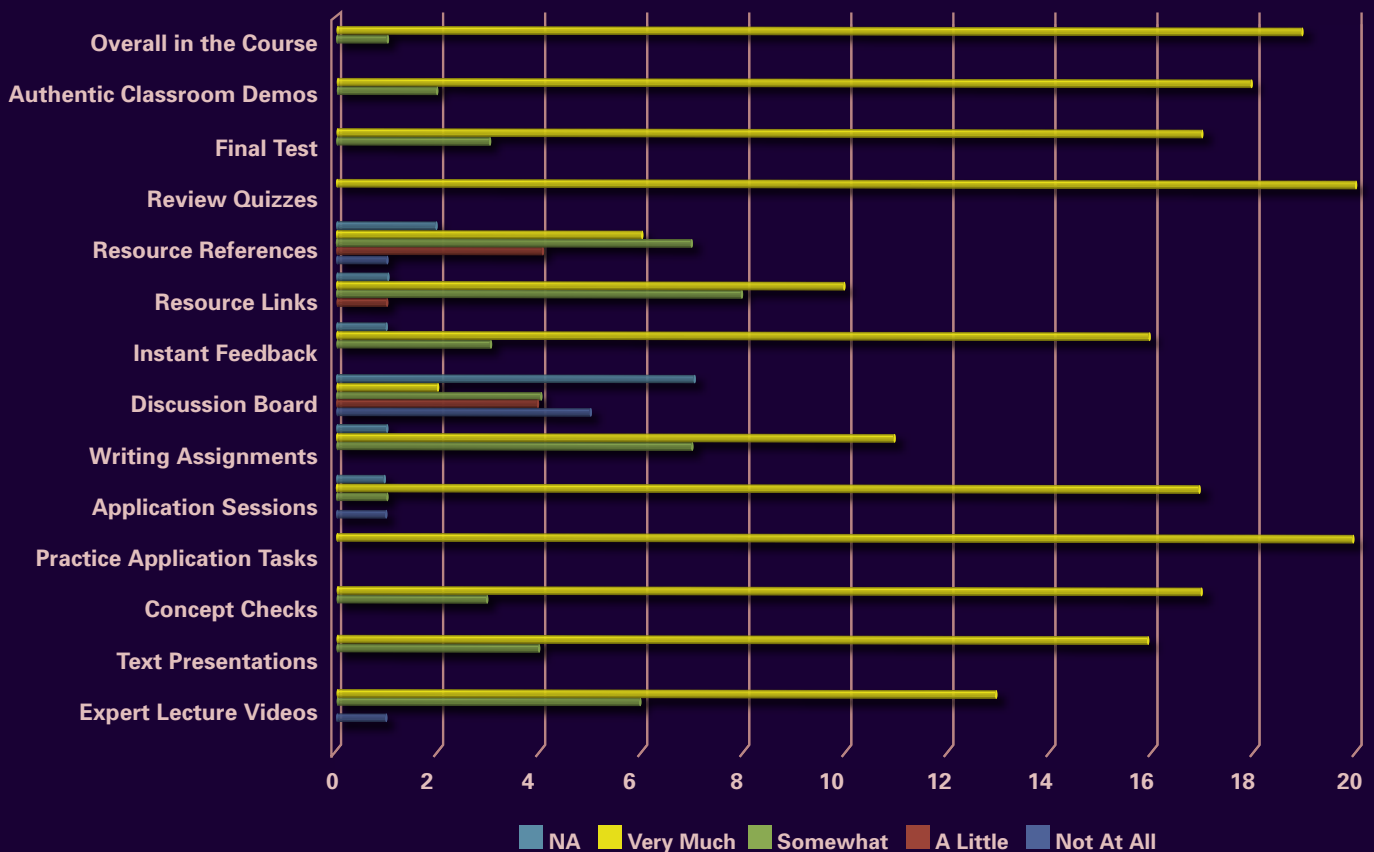
When the teachers were asked whether TDI imparted a considerable degree of content learning potential, 100% of them agreed. In addition, every teacher also agreed that TDI imparted a considerable degree of language learning potential. Specifically:

- 90% of the teachers reported a good understanding of the course content.
- 65% of the teachers believed that their professional English improved.
- the remaining 35% considered their language abilities "somewhat" improved.
- on average, 76.25% of the teachers perceived the content and learning potential of TDI as strong.

To measure how well teachers retained the TDI module content, researchers averaged the results of a series of five quizzes and a module test. Chart 2 demonstrates that, on average, teachers retained > 90% of the TDI module content. Researchers also found "excellent" content learning potential when viewed on a per test (90.25%) or per teacher (90.25%) basis.

Universally, teachers **valued** the **learning potential** of TDI.

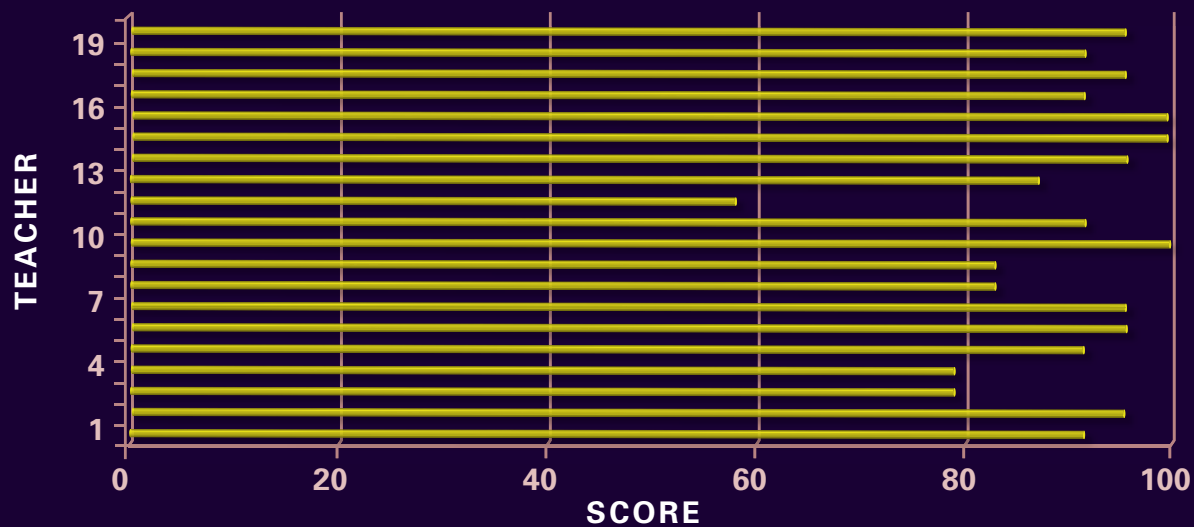
CHART 1: Teachers Rate TDI's Learning Potential



When the teachers were asked whether TDI imparted a considerable degree of content learning potential, **100% of them agreed.**

Teachers successfully **understood** the meaning and relevance of **the course content**.

CHART 2: Teachers Retention of TDI Content



Teachers explained **course concepts** from their own experiences and how they would apply to their classroom.

2

Meaning Focus:
Does TDI direct teachers' attention toward the meaning of the course content?

Beyond appreciating TDI's learning potential, teachers were asked if they were able to appreciate the meaning and relevance of the course concepts. Two surveys administered during the course indicated that teachers successfully understood the meaning and relevance of the

course content. 70% of the teachers rated their ability to explain TDI's ideas and concepts as "very well," while 30% said "somewhat." The teachers showed this ability by applying what they learned in the course. They demonstrated their comprehension of the course topics and their ability to explain concepts based on their own understanding. Specifically, teachers were able to explain a) the course concepts by giving examples from their own experiences, b) how each concept might apply in their classrooms, and c) how they learned, how they taught, and what their students' needs were.

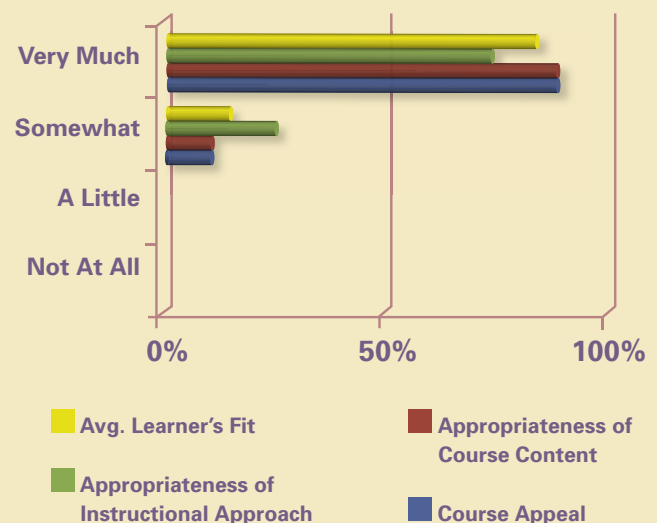
3

Learner Fit:
Does TDI fit teachers' needs and characteristics?

Every teacher that participated in the TDI course indicated that TDI suited their needs and learning characteristics. In response to survey questions, Chart 3 shows that 75% of the teachers scored TDI's instructional approach as "very" appropriate, while 25% claimed "somewhat" appropriate. In their e-mails, teachers made positive statements indicating that TDI's learning materials and tasks were clear and targeted to their levels of ability. An overwhelming 85% of teachers found TDI suitable for their needs and characteristics, and 15% viewed it as "somewhat" suitable.

*Suits teacher **learning** methods.*

CHART 3: Does TDI Fit Teachers' Needs and Characteristics?



"TDI made teachers think about better ways of teaching and helping their students learn the language more communicatively."

4

Impact:
Does TDI have a positive impact on teachers?

Using a four-point Likert scale survey and one open-ended survey question, researchers quantified the impact of TDI on teachers. Chart 4 shows:

- 90% of the teachers like TDI “very much.”
- 75% found TDI motivating.
- 70% claimed TDI helped them grow professionally and intellectually.
- 60% developed some new learning strategies in the course.

“I felt encouraged to apply, adapt, and develop new things/ideas to improve myself as a teacher.”



5

Authenticity: Are TDI’s content, materials, and tasks relevant to teachers’ immediate professional practice?

In survey responses, 85% of the teachers saw a strong connection between the content of the TDI materials and their instructional needs, while 15% claimed “some-what” of a connection (Chart 5). These results were supported by nine teachers’ favorable e-mail comments.

“I stepped into my class fresh and with lots of new ideas to have fun with my students.”

CHART 4: Does TDI Have a Positive Impact on Teachers?

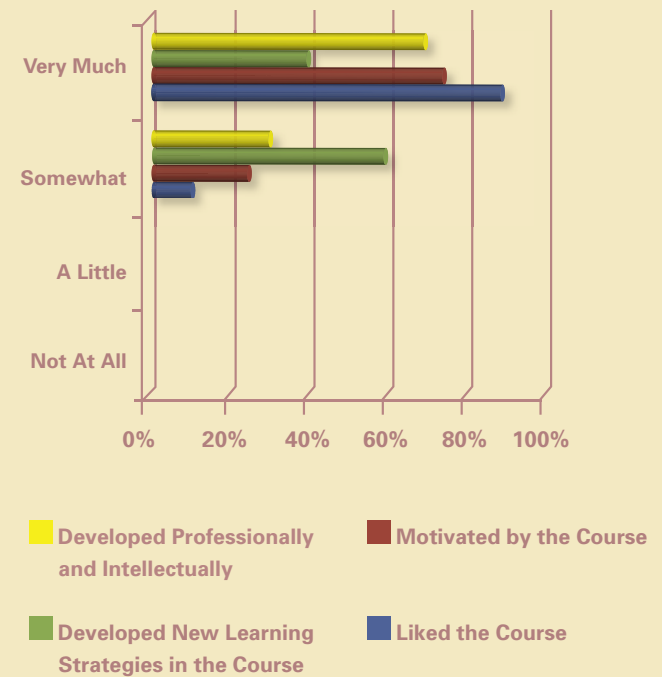
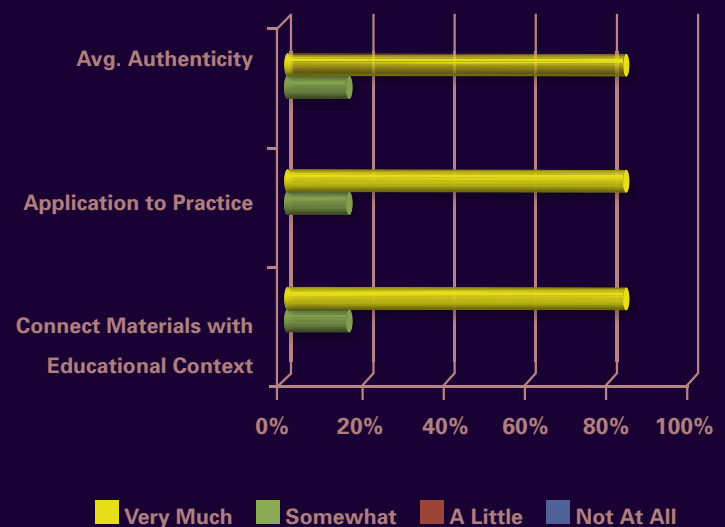


CHART 5: Does TDI Apply Well?



Teachers perceive a **strong connection** between TDI and their **instructional needs**.

Despite a wide range of computer literacy and access, teachers **liked** the overall **usability and practicality** “very much.”

6

Practicality: Do TDI’s technology and resource requirements match existing resources?

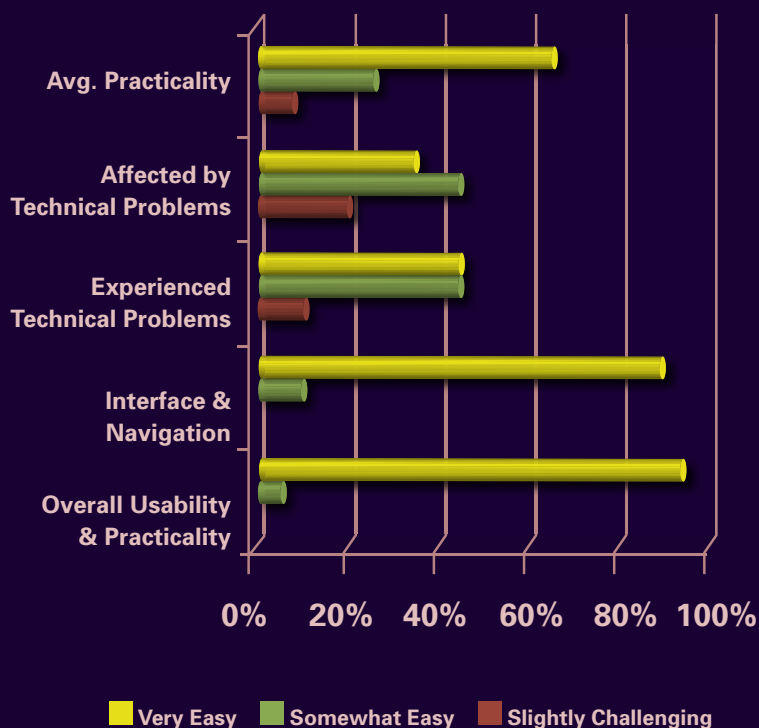
Teachers were asked to rate the quality of their online TDI experience. Despite having a wide range of Internet accessibility and varying levels of computer literacy, Chart 6 shows that 95% of the teachers liked the overall usability and practicality of the course “very much.” Regarding technical issues with TDI, observations included:

- 45% of the teachers had no technical problems.
- 45% experienced such problems “occasionally.”
- only 10% had to “frequently” deal with technical issues.

Teachers who had occasional technical problems said that those were solved as soon as they brought the difficulty to their instructor’s attention.

“Taking this course has given me the opportunity to explore and experiment with new challenges related to language teaching. I feel more confident to face different situations in my daily classes.”

CHART 6: How Easy Is TDI to Use?



7

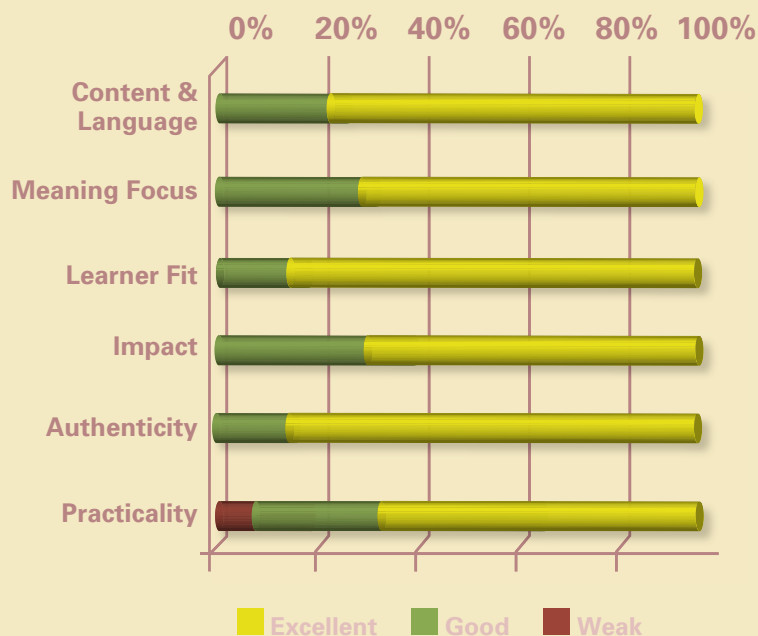
Overall: Is TDI an appropriate instructional tool to foster teacher learning and maximize teacher effectiveness?

A summary of the data that researchers collected is shown in Chart 7. In every category examined, teachers rated TDI learning qualities positively. From a strong body of evidence, the researchers concluded that TDI was an appropriate instructional tool. Specifically, TDI provided materials and an environment that:

- fostered a considerable degree of learning.
- adequately directed learners’ attention to the meaning of the course content.
- fit learners well in terms of instructional design, materials, and tasks.
- had positive effects on learners.
- ensured a correspondence between the content and activities in the course and the target professional needs of the students.
- provided adequate technology and resources.

Furthermore, researchers reported that TDI gave teachers several opportunities to review, learn, and explore new ways of teaching.

CHART 7: Overall TDI Rating



*In every category, teachers **rated TDI learning positively.***

The Impact of *Teacher Development Interactive* (TDI) in Teachers' Conceptualization of Language Teaching Methodology

In an alternate study, Díaz and Fernández (2010) analyzed the impact of TDI on language teaching methods. They measured the teachers' ability to transfer theory into practice, and the teachers' awareness of, and attitudes towards teaching language. Representing all stages in a typical professional career, 21 teachers completed this study while participating in the TDI Speaking Module.

The researchers wanted to know whether the TDI Speaking Module content influenced the methods that teachers used to teach speaking in their classrooms. Before taking the TDI Module, teachers performed the pre-course task of planning a speaking lesson. After completing the module, a post-course task required the teachers to modify their original plans, and apply what they learned. Learning impact was determined by comparing the teachers' ability to achieve predetermined learning objectives in their pre-course and post-course tasks.

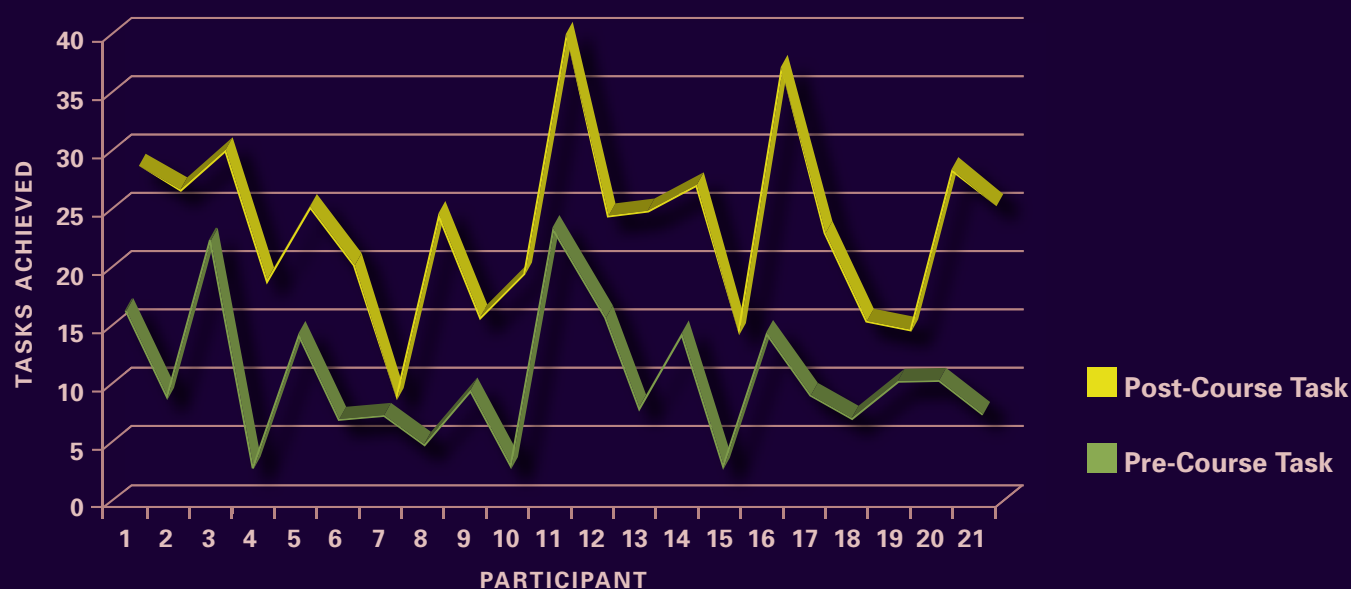
The results, summarized in Chart 8, are striking. All teachers experienced learning gains in their understanding of current methodology to teach speaking. On average, after taking the TDI course, each teacher attained **more than twice** the number of objectives than they attained before taking the course. In addition, the post-course task results demonstrated that all teachers improved their understanding of speaking methodology concepts, as evidenced by their ability to apply these concepts to their lesson plans.



Díaz and Fernández found that 78% of the teachers ranked the reflective tasks posed by the TDI module as the most helpful learning activity. They proposed that TDI's impact was rooted in the opportunity it provided teachers to reflect on their practices. While engaged in the TDI experience, all teachers developed a meta-language about teaching speaking. This allowed them to reframe and construct/reconstruct their understanding of this skill while enabling them to reflect on their teaching decisions from a more informed perspective than when they planned the pre-course speaking lesson.

All teachers **experienced** learning gains...

**CHART 8: Attainment of Learning Objectives
Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Task**



Each teacher attained **more than twice** the number of objectives than they attained before taking the course.

In Conclusion

Taken together, these studies provide compelling evidence of TDI's efficacy and indicate that TDI facilitates learning for all teachers. The modules are relevant, understandable, practical to apply, and easy to use. The module design and content is well suited for teachers and favorably perceived. ELT professionals agree that *Teacher Development Interactive* is an effective learning tool for teachers with a wide range of experience.



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Chapelle, C. A. (2001). *Computer applications in second language acquisition: Foundations for teaching, testing, and research*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

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