TRANSFORMING LEARNING AND TEACHING THROUGH THE “LEARNING THAT LASTS COURSE”

“I have received ‘training of trainers’ and facilitation trainings from different organizations already, but this is the most enjoyable learning of my life” said one of the participants in the “Learning that LASTS” (LtL) course that SIL Bangladesh offered this year. What is LtL? It is a five-day long intensive course for people who want to improve their ability to teach or train adults. Each workshop is limited to 12 participants who experience the five principles of LtL in action and gain experience putting them into practice. Everything that is taught is modeled and practiced by the teachers and learners during the workshop. The course was developed by Dr Roland Walker, based on the work of Jane Vella.

The Learning that LASTS handbook explains that the five principles represented by the acronym LASTS are a short summary of how adults learn. The acronym L.A.S.T.S. stands for 1) **Learner Centered**: Teachers invest in the success of learners by getting to know them; then selecting relevant content. Respect for learners builds relationships that foster learning. 2) **Action with Reflection**: Learn by doing, then reflect on the outcome and share insights. The quality of learning is related to the quality of reflection on our actions. 3) **Solving Problems**: Effective teachers provide resources for learners, but they also ask powerful questions to stimulate learners to interact with those resources. 4) **Teamwork**: Teamwork helps solve problems because it draws on the resources of all group members. 5) **Self Discovery/Self Direction**: Effective teachers invite learners to direct their own learning and share the power for shaping their own process of learning.

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I took the LtL course in 2007. After completing it, SIL Bangladesh asked me to get involved in teaching LtL. I wasn’t very interested in teaching before my experience with LtL but LtL changed my perspective on teaching and transformed me in various ways. I now find myself confidently designing and leading sessions for adults on any topic. This has been the most remarkable change in my professional life since starting to teach on LtL.

When we first started running LtL courses we used materials that had been developed in English. However, in 2009 SIL Bangladesh ran the first LtL course in Bangla. Native Bangla speakers from different organizations completed the course successfully and the outcomes were outstanding. I was very pleased to observe remarkable dialogue and participation, clear understanding during each session and quick responses from the learners. It was very encouraging for me to see how using the mother tongue could have such a positive impact and make learning faster. The event was a milestone in the development of LtL by SIL Bangladesh and we now run LtL courses in Bangla every year.

I continue to teach and train adults from different backgrounds who are applying their learning in different contexts, including training/workshop settings, cross-cultural and corporate environments. For me this is not only about training others but also a learning opportunity. I love teaching LtL and helping to bring about change in others’ lives. I have lots more to learn, but I am glad to be able to help those around me and I am interested in unlocking new perspectives and opening people’s eyes to dialogue education and the principles of adult learning. It is a joy to see more people equipped as effective teachers and trainers.

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SIL Bangladesh helps communities achieve their development goals while retaining their ethnolinguistic identities.