

## **DOST-funded software to help call center agents, students speak better English**

Written by Angelica A. de Leon, S&T Media Service, DOST-STII  
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The Philippine call center sector, called the sunshine industry a few years back, is set for even brighter days ahead as it receives a much needed boost with the release of a language training software that aims to teach Juan dela Cruz how not to mix his Fs and Ps and speak better English.

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST), through its sectoral council, the Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development (PCIEERD), in partnership with the University of the Philippines Diliman, launched the trial version of the software, called the “Learning English Application for Pinoys” or LEAP last November 22 at the Eastwood Richmonde Hotel in Quezon City.

Program LEAP is categorized under Project 7 of the ICT for Education Inter-disciplinary Signal Processing for Pinoys Program, or ISIP, which is part of DOST’s Engineering Research and Development for Technology initiative.

A computer-based stand-alone training system, LEAP is a supplementary tool to prepare high school and college students for the call center industry in a bid to help the country regain its footing as a stronghold of English language competency and push it further into the forefront of the global BPO industry.

“DOST supports this project in the hope of raising the level of skills and competencies of Filipinos working in the BPO industry or seeking employment in the BPO industry or any other industry for that matter,” said DOST Secretary Mario G. Montejo in his keynote speech read by Dr. Rowena Cristina L. Guevara, PCIEERD executive director.

During the launch, Dr. Susan P Festin, ISIP 7 project leader, cited a study by the Social Weather Station which indicated that Filipinos’ English language ability has been sliding since 1993. Another study, undertaken in 2005, found that the hiring rates of IT-BPO companies in the country were only four to six percent, with poor English skills cited as a major drawback.

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Earlier, Dr. Guevara delivered the welcome remarks at the launch attended by representatives from the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Business Processing Association of the Philippines (BPAP), and the Department of Trade and Industry-Board of Investments (DTI-BOI), among others. “We have realized that science and technology, and the number of people who are doing science and technology, are very good indicators of progress,” said Dr. Guevara.

The newly launched trial version constitutes half of the LEAP software covering a 10-module Language Training Program. The Linux and Windows-based program tackles the groundwork for English fluency—from tenses, pronouns and prepositions, to idioms and other basic topics related to grammar and vocabulary.

The other half of the software features its Speech Training Program which will tackle Filipinos’ common speech lapses, among others.

The launch was highlighted by a demonstration and presentation of the software courtesy of Dr. Festin and the turnover and distribution of LEAP CDs. Demo computers were also available to allow guests to try out the trial version and have a glimpse of LEAP’s Speech Module.

Prior to the launch, the software underwent usability testing in various schools including the Bulacan State University and Negros Oriental State University, among others.