Syllabus Design for Oral Proficiency of EGAP Students in the University Classroom
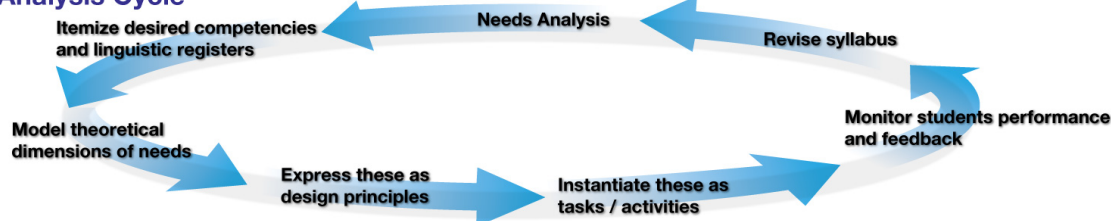
Introduction

Central problem: Postgraduate students of varying (non-English) ethno-linguistic backgrounds doing social science degrees, in English medium, in Japanese university. Most are 'false beginners' of English: linguistic competence in English greatly exceeds interactional competence. Students anxious and feel inadequate about: 1) participating effectively with peers, supervisors in seminars in English and 2) presenting their research in dissertation defenses and at conferences.
As a result, the university offers EGAP short courses: 15 weekly meetings, 90 min. classes.

MEIJI UNIVERSITY

Nicholas Marshall
nmarshall@gol.com

Needs Analysis Cycle

Needs Analysis → Itemize desired competencies and linguistic registers → Model theoretical dimensions of needs → Express these as design principles → Instantiate these as tasks / activities → Monitor students performance and feedback → Revise syllabus

Needs Analysis

*University must deliver EGAP courses around 'carrier' themes for students from diverse subject areas such as: governance, finance, literature, history

*Students: range of experience of communication in English, various backgrounds: Japan, China, Bangla Desh, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, various African countries

*In short term, little chance to impact on students' general English proficiency; instead, transform student experiences of participatory experience in English language: interactional competence

*Class must address 2 main needs:

Effective interaction with academic supervisors, peers, and:

Present own research in dissertation defences, public conferences, answer questions about research.

[less concern with sociolinguistic competence]

Syllabus Design: Theory

1) Interactional Competence:

*Dialogical perspectives: co-construction of meanings with others

*Thin syllabus/thick curriculum (Leo van Lier)

*Constructivist pedagogy: process syllabus and project work

*Peer negotiation of content and learner roles in small group project work

*General interactional competence

2) Psycholinguistics:

*Monological perspectives

*Practice with complex information processing in real time

*Simultaneous focus on: fluency, complexity, accuracy

*Restricted register

Syllabus Design: Practice

1) Interactional Competence:

*Project work: Area Studies as effective carrier

*Example: Africa: select country, theme: finance, economics, culture/regionalism, governance, etc

*Collective negotiation of group projects: allocate individual roles to group members

*Present to whole class at later date

*Students evaluate own performance

2) Psycholinguistics:

*Group and individual presentations

*Answer questions

*Repeat performance: lexical density

Conclusion

· Syllabus should contain high frequency lexis and general themes
· Tasks and activities should foster transfer of competencies outside EGAP classroom
· Syllabus under constant review and revision
· Revision of one element in syllabus design cycle impacts on all

References:

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive Approach to Language Learning.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Young, R. F. (2009). *Discursive Practice in Language Learning and Teaching.* Malden, MA: Wiley–Blackwell.