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. At a result, the university offers EGAP short courses: 15 weekly meetings, 90 min. clames.

Needs Analysis

Needs Analysis Cycle

- 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, Bangladesh, 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 defenses, 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 (Lao 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 less and general themes
- Tasks and activities should foster transfer of competencies outside EGAP classroom
- Syllabus under constant review and revisions
- Reviews of one element in syllabus design cycle impacts on all

References: