この研究では、英語カリキュラムを改善するための提案を行っています。

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Suggestions for Improving the English Language Curriculum at SUAC

This paper is based on research funded by a special research grant from the Dean of the Faculty of Cultural Policy and Management. The majority of this research was conducted during the summer of 2001 in the United States. The paper first details the existing problems of the ESL curriculum at SUAC and then suggests various positive improvements based on the best ESL program models.

The following paper is the result of research conducted in the United States during the summer of 2001. That research was abruptly terminated by the events of September 11, though I had already assembled enough materials to support the conclusions presented here.

Before discussing my positive suggestions for improving the ESL curriculum, I would like to review some of our current practices that prevent students from gaining the maximum benefits in their study of English. The crucial importance of English language skill for students entering the new global economy requires us to give them the best possible education. Identifying the problems now can help solve them later.

1. The current curriculum provides only two first-year classes in oral communication: English Communication I and IV. These meet for only 90 minutes once a week. Once-a-week classes make it very difficult for students to develop any continuity in their language learning. The lapse of a whole week between direct exposure to English guarantees their memory and skills will fade from lack of practice.

2. Even more serious, however, is the brevity of instructional time. No program I am familiar with in the United States attempts to teach an introductory foreign language on a schedule of 90 minutes per week. Exposure time is important for development of oral communication skills, and 90 minutes is far too short. At the University of Colorado, for example, first year Beginning Japanese (JPNS 1010, 1020) meets for five credit hours each semester. The same is true for Beginning Chinese (CHIN 1010, 1020). Many other universities will budget at least three to four hours a week for first-year language classes. It might be argued that a weekly 90-minute class provides adequate instructional time, since most of our students have already studied English for six to seven years between middle school and high school. That argument fails on the fact that the overwhelming majority of Japanese first year university students are false learners, having invested all their time in mastering useless test English. They possess only the most rudimentary oral communication skills and need at least 200 minutes a week to bring up their skills to anything like a basic level.

3. English Communication I and IV lack a coherent, uniform content. These classes are currently taught by one full-time and two part-time native speakers, with a second full-time native speaker to join the program in the 2003-04 academic year and a fourth in the 2004-05 academic year. Each of the three current teachers uses a different textbook, employs different instructional techniques and grades by different standards. All three teach without mutual consultation or coordination. There is no reason to believe that coordination will improve with the addition of two more native speakers.

4. The problem of an inconsistent content in English Communication I and IV is compounded by the freedom of students to change teachers in the second semester. Whatever the reasons for their migration to another section, they suffer the consequences of adopting a new textbook, adapting to new teaching methods and undergoing new evaluative standards in the middle of the year. This is easily rectified: students should not be permitted to change instructors at the second semester.

5. The optimum class size for a beginning ESL course should be about 12-15 students. At present, English Communication I and IV classes are running from the low 20s to the high 30s. This makes it impossible to devote individual time with the
students and forces the use of pair practice or group practice, both less desirable and less productive than direct interaction with the instructor.

6. Many of the problems I have outlined above could be solved if SUAC adopted the credit hour system used throughout North America. This allows flexibility in meshing the ideal instructional time with the content level of the course. All classes need not then fit into a single, once-a-week 90-minute procrustean bed. Changing to a credit hour system is not feasible in the short run, but it should be considered for a later reform of the SUAC curriculum. Some form of credit hour scheduling is growing in popularity among private universities. I suspect that credit hour curricula will eventually become the norm in Japan. The sooner SUAC switches to it the better.

We now turn to some positive suggestions for ESL curriculum based on my research in the United States.

Course Objectives

The most pressing need right now is to develop an inventory of the specific course objectives that students should achieve at every level of their studies here at SUAC. As an example I would like to adduce the course objectives of the American English Institute at California State University, Fresno (hereafter CSUF). This is one of the older and certainly one of the finest ESL programs in the United States. The course objectives at CSUF fall into five classes, Level A to Level F, running from the lowest Level F to the highest Level A. Each level comprises three related areas of language learning whose mastery is associated with a minimum TOEFL score: (1) listening and speaking along with reading; (2) writing and grammar; and (3) language laboratory and pronunciation. Here are the course objectives (somewhat abbreviated) for Listening/Speaking and Reading at Level A with a minimum TOEFL of 480:

Listening and Speaking

- Participates in group discussions, role playing, problem solving and debates.
- Identifies the main points of an unsimplified lecture, movie segment or interview on each theme.
- Demonstrates effective strategies for taking notes.
- Satisfactorily takes notes while listening to guest speakers.
- Gives an 8-10-minute oral presentation about a research paper.
- Presents at least one 8-10 minute speech.
- Submits a dialogue journal once every three weeks and demonstrates satisfactory improvement in fluency and pronunciation.
- Observes a university class, takes notes, and completes post-listening assignments.

Reading

- Completes reading a broad array of materials.
- Demonstrates knowledge of these reading strategies:
  - guessing meaning from context
The University of Oregon furnishes another example of a highly-developed course objective system. Its American English Institute (no relation to CSUF’s American English Institute), perhaps the finest ESL program in the United States, employs a six-level system of course objectives in the Intensive English Program for beginning through advanced students. I am going to list all six levels in detail because they demonstrate the sort of careful attention to the progressive development of student skills that is lacking in the SUAC ESL curriculum:

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### Level One

**Integrated Skills. (18 hours per week)**

Students learn to communicate in situations of daily life. They develop basic reading, writing, grammar, listening and speaking skills, and begin building a foundation of vocabulary. They practice real communication using materials that include video and audiotapes, books, newspapers and magazines, and visits to the local community. The overall goal of the course is to help them become familiar and confident when functioning in their immediate environment. Computer work is included, as needed.

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### Level Two

**Reading/Writing. (8 hours per week)**

Students improve their reading and writing abilities by developing their vocabulary, grammar, and meaning-based knowledge. They learn to summarize the main points of a simple reading passage, read some unsimplified materials, and use an English-only dictionary fairly comfortably. They become familiar with the connections between how English is written and how it is pronounced. Typical classwork includes reading material, then discussing and writing about it. Students use computers for email and word processing.

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**Grammar. (5 hours per week)**

Students learn new grammar that appears in some of the materials that they are reading in Reading/Writing class. In addition, they begin to recognize some of the mistakes that are common in their own writing, and to correct some of these errors.
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some of the time. Study focuses on grammar forms, grammar meaning, and grammar use. Practice is oral as well as written. Grammar points include simple verb tenses, person and number, subjects and objects, subject-verb agreement, and independent-dependent clauses in sentence structure.

Oral Skills. (5 hours per week)
Students develop speaking/listening skills at a simple level, using vocabulary that is appropriate for personal topics and functions related to daily life. They learn strategies to use when they don’t know how to say what they mean. They strengthen their familiarity with the connections between how English is written and how it is pronounced. In addition to small-group work and whole-class work, students will give two oral presentations to their classmates during the course.

Level Three

Reading/Writing. (8 hours per week)
While increasing their reading fluency and comprehension, students learn different purposes for reading, gathering information, and responding to what they have read. They learn strategies for understanding vocabulary from the context of the passage. They move from relying on translation toward thinking and comprehending in English alone. They work on reading and writing faster. They read a complete unsimplified novel that was written for young adults, as well as shorter reading passages. Frequent writing practice ranges from single paragraphs to longer personal or informative essays. The course emphasizes critical thinking about reading passages and discussion/analysis of new concepts. Students use computers for email and word processing.

Grammar. (5 hours per week)
Students study grammar rules as needed and spend most of the course time practicing grammar in speaking, reading, writing, and listening. They learn both to recognize and to use the points covered in the course. They focus on grammar forms and grammar use. They learn to correct common errors in their own written assignments. Grammar points include verb tenses, irregular verb forms, time clauses, modal verbs, question forms, verb + preposition combinations, and articles.

Oral Skills. (5 hours per week)
Expanding their base of useful survival English, students learn to converse on topics of interest. They develop fluency and pronunciation so that they can build confidence in speaking. They work in small groups and also improve their ability to speak before the whole class. Course activities focus on real communication, and students perform frequent out-of-class speaking assignments that bring them into contact with native speakers of English. The course includes regular work on pronunciation and intonation.
Level Four

Reading/Writing. (8 hours per week)

Students read unsimplified materials and complete typical college/university reading and writing tasks. All assignments and activities are connected with the readings that are done for the class. Students develop their reading and writing ability through independent reading projects in which they read articles of their own choice, read two novels, and do reading assignments in class. All activities combine reading, writing, vocabulary, and discussion. Computer exercises for writing, formatting, and reading continue at this level.

Grammar. (5 hours per week)

The grammar curriculum is based on a spiraling repetition of structures through the levels and on the communicative use of those structures. Grammar 4 combines study of specific grammatical points with communicative, contextual practice in speaking and writing. It approaches grammar from a sentence and discourse level. It also focuses on training students to edit their own writing for grammatical errors. By asking students to analyze the writing they have done in writing class, this course serves to link the twin goals of fluency and accuracy.

Oral Skills. (5 hours per week)

Oral Skills 4 is a content-based course with goal-directed units in which the learners are expected to generate discussion on a variety of topics. Learners develop skills in working in small groups to complete tasks and in utilizing native speaker resources outside of the classroom. Activities include listening to song lyrics and conversational tapes, watching and listening to videos, interviewing both classmates and native speakers, reporting on interview results, producing regular audiotape journal entries, discussing theme-related topics (in small groups and as a class), note taking, short speeches, and drama production.

Level Five

Reading/Writing/Research. (8 hours per week)

Students read, write, and do research for college/university level tasks. The course emphasizes the development of summarizing and paraphrasing skills. The course is divided into two content units: one is a computer simulation in which students practice reading, summarizing, paraphrasing, and discussion in order to solve a problem; in the second students choose a topic, learn to locate information about it from the university library and the Internet, and write a brief research paper about it. In addition, they complete three independent study units of their own choosing that may include vocabulary development, reading improvement, writing practice, or computer skills.

Grammar/Reading. (5 hours per week)

Grammar study for this advanced course is connected with a full-length fiction or nonfiction bestseller that students read. Students keep weekly journals in which
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they write about what they are reading, become familiar with their own common grammar errors, and learn how to find and correct them. Points of grammar include sentence analysis, verb tenses, articles, passive/active verbs, participles used as adjectives, reduced clauses, modals, conditionals/hypotheticals, and parallelism.

Oral Skills. (5 hours per week)

Instruction emphasizes student participation in a wide variety of speaking activities. Group discussion is addressed through cooperative problem solving, negotiation, and decision making exercises. Individual cooperative problem-solving centers on negotiation, and decision making exercises. Individual oral presentations focus on building personal confidence as well as skill. Listening skills, including fast natural speech and those appropriate for attending formal, academic lectures, are practiced. Preparatory activities involve previewing vocabulary and, when appropriate, listening to introductory presentations of similar topics by the instructor in anticipation of a guest lecturer. Students are introduced to procedures for taking notes while listening to lectures on a variety of general and academic topics.

Level Six

Reading/Writing. (8 hours per week)

Work on developing skills needed for college and university work, ranging from junior college level to graduate level. This means developing truly independent, active study habits and skills. Analytical and critical thinking is fostered and where possible required in both reading and writing tasks. Integration of skills is a given at Level 6.

Grammar. (5 hours per week)

The class systematically reviews Level 6 grammar points (clause structures, conditionals, etc.). We also work closely with corresponding Reading/Writing materials and student produced work to address student needs.

Oral Skills. (5 hours per week)

Each week students are exposed to videos or lectures on various topics in such fields as history, business, astronomy, folklore, psychology, and art. Class and small group discussions are held on these topics. Vocabulary and listening quizzes are given frequently to enable learners to analyze their individual problems. Frequent pronunciation exercises help improve stress and intonation. Each participant gives short talks for discussion and evaluation.

SUAC's curriculum lacks such detailed course objectives for its ESL courses. The official course descriptions that were created years ago during the planning for SUAC are so vague as to be useless. That is why sections of the same course taught by full- and part-time staff are so divergent in content. One only need look at the three sections of this year's 英語上級 III, for example, to see how little they resemble each other or the official content description. There is,
however, one fairly simple way to improve the program without any major reform: (a) first develop exact skill objectives for all existing courses along the lines of the two above and (b) then require all staff, especially staff teaching multiple sections of the same course, to select textbooks and use teaching methods that will meet the stated objectives. It will eventually be necessary to formalize course objectives and impose them on all instructors if our ESL program is to produce the skillful students we must produce for our own good reputation. The university should begin moving in that direction as soon as possible.

Another lesson we can learn from the course objectives in the CSUF and University of Oregon programs is the integration of language skills. At CSUF, reading is closely tied to listening and speaking because they are the essential precursors to effective understanding of written English. Writing and grammar are then coupled as related skills that synergistically reinforce each other. Finally, language laboratory practice is naturally joined to pronunciation practice. At the University of Oregon, each of its six levels combines reading/writing, grammar and oral skills. Such an integrated or modular curriculum is impossible at SUAC given the scheduling regimen of once-a-week, 90-minute classes.

Placement Examinations

One of the greatest problems facing those who teach is the great diversity of English skills among first-year students. A very small number amounting to perhaps 2-5% have basic oral competence at the beginning or intermediate level, a much larger number around 80% are false learners and cannot in effect say much of anything (though they do know a considerable amount of grammar and vocabulary) and a third modest number of about 15% are—despite their score on the entrance examination—illiterate. This last group cannot hear, speak or write normal English; their one ability is the ability to pass entrance examinations. It is never a good idea to mix such a wide range of skills in a single class. That is what we now do at SUAC. The effective teaching of conversational English is exceptionally difficult in large classes numbering over fifteen students of such disparate skills. We need, therefore, to institute a placement examination so students can be placed in classes of approximately uniform skill level. Such a test is not difficult to create or administer. It should consist, in the simplest form, of two parts: (a) a listening and structure test and (b) a short oral interview. The listening test would be a 30-minute multiple choice test of between 50 and 90 items. Students would listen to questions and statements and choose the best answer. The structure test would also be a multiple choice test lasting one hour and covering about 100 items in grammar, vocabulary and reading. The oral interview need only be about five minutes long. It is quite easy to determine conversational skill level in that time. On the basis of the placement examination, students could then be funneled into two or preferably three skill levels, permitting the teachers to select the most appropriate teaching materials and techniques for each level. This is the practice at all ESL programs in the United States and ought to be adopted here.

Intermediate and Advanced ESL Courses

The absence of intermediate and advanced English conversation programs at SUAC is a serious liability in our curriculum. Students must in essence learn all their oral English in just one year, a patent impossibility with the current schedule and class loads. Students who complete are, with the most generous optimism, just approaching the out-
skirts of intermediate level English. From that shaky basis, they are then supposed to plunge into more advanced second-year courses. Since very few can handle English as originally conceived, the actual content must be skewed downward to the students' modest level. Students who complete ESL I and IV should, therefore be able to continue their studies for a second year at the intermediate level and a third at the advanced level in courses meeting between 150 and 250 minutes per week. This is the normal progression in all foreign language classes in the United States. It is, therefore, extremely important that intermediate and advanced conversation classes be added to the curriculum at some time in the future if our students are to gain true, rather than specious, mastery of English.

Language Laboratory Use

All the ESL specialists I met during my research in the United States affirmed the importance of maintaining self-access to the language laboratory. We have gone part way to that goal: the laboratory is now open two days a week (Wednesday and Thursday) to students who register with the Office. Sometime in the future we should expand the self-access days to cover the whole week. Furthermore, the utility of the language laboratory could be greatly increased by installing more software. At present, students only have access to the BBC New English Course multimedia software and the TOEIC practice software. There exists, however, a wealth of excellent computer software for conversation practice, vocabulary development and reading. With the cooperation of the Information Center staff, we should continue to install new or update older software for cost-effective use of the laboratory and the greatest benefit to our students. I might add that inclusion of TOEFL practice software is a high desideratum. The TOEFL test score is widely-used in North America for admission to university and should be an option for SUAC students who contemplate studying there.

Reading Materials, Reading Incentive Programs and Reading Rooms

Reading comprehension can only improve if students read genuine, unadulterated English and not the typical short stories and manufactured prose that fill so many of the useless readers published here in Japan. Such readers also hinder them by providing definitions and explanations in Japanese. Students should, on the contrary, learn the various strategies for effective reading comprehension (guessing from context, scanning, paraphrasing and summarizing) and not waste time on the futile exercise of translating bits and pieces of sentences into and out of Japanese. To that end, the English staff should draw up a list of basic reading materials–all available in the library graded by vocabulary and difficulty. This list should then be posted in the library as part of a Reading Incentives Program. In such a program, students read whole works of English prose appropriate to their level and keep a journal with substantial, detailed notes about their reading. Once they have read a certain number of works at a given level and demonstrated their comprehension by submission of the reading journal, they are rewarded in some tangible, public way. It would also be helpful if one room on campus could be converted to a reading room with good lighting and comfortable chairs. The reading room would be stocked with interesting magazines and a wide variety of reading materials to stimulate interest. Virtually all ESL programs post a directory of basic reading materials in the library, encourage students to participate in Reading Incentive Programs and make quiet reading rooms available on campus.
Greco-Latin Etymology

Nearly 60 percent of English vocabulary comes from Greek and Latin, either directly via the medium of translation or indirectly through French loan words. This component of the vocabulary is necessary for all the sciences and for such abstract topics as philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, political science and economics. Without a reasonable grasp of that vocabulary, students are forever debarred from reading, writing or understanding more advanced expository prose and fiction. The cardinal problem then is how to help students gain some control over this huge mass of words with their intricate semantic relationships. One of the most efficient ways is through a one-semester course in Greco-Latin etymologies. If we teach students (a) the meaning of the basic Greek and Latin roots that form the English words and (b) the various ways that the roots are combined, they will be in a position to make an accurate guess at the meaning of new words they encounter. Courses in Greco-Latin etymologies are not only common in many ESL programs, they have become a standard part of the regular first-year English composition curriculum. Of course, the best way to master the Classical stratum of English vocabulary is to take a year or two of Latin. The increasing popularity of Latin in American secondary schools is a direct result of its importance for learning English vocabulary, the largest of all languages. This is not, however, a practical solution for Japan. A course in Greco-Latin etymologies is the answer.

Student-selected Texts and Recordings

Many ESL programs in the United States have found that students are far more motivated to read or speak if they are permitted to bring self-selected texts and recordings to class for group discussion. Each week a new student brings one short text or recording to class, introduces it, surveys any difficult words or phrases and then opens the class to a free-wheeling discussion. This type of exercise works better if students have achieved at least an intermediate level in conversational English. Professor Ellen Lipp, chairwoman of the ESL program at CSUF, told me during my tour of the university (September 7, 2002) that she felt student presentations were a powerful motivational tool in the hands of a good teacher.

Internet Pen Pals

One valuable way to promote more spontaneous expression in student writing is to set up an internet pen pal program. This program permits students from all over the world to write each other in English. A SUAC student would, for example, select an email address from a pool of international students who wish to conduct an internet pen pal correspondence. He or she would then send the potential pen pal a self-introduction and suggest they correspond. Once a good pen pal has been found, students will typically write more often with greater comfort and less inhibitions than they would for a class. The more they write, however many the errors, the more they have a chance to interact in English and learn the idiom of friendly letter writing. Since most foreign student have far high English skills than Japanese, they can in an informal way serve as virtual teachers and mentors.
University-to-university Affiliation

My final suggestion for the health of SUAC’s ESL program concerns the need to forge a close relationship with an American university. However helpful it may be for students to study for the summer at UNITEC, the long-range interests of the university, both its English staff and students, will only be satisfied if we develop a close working relationship with a major university in the United States. Many advantages accrue from such a relationship: faculty and student exchanges, access to better noncommercial ESL schools and participation in mutual research programs, conferences and international fora. The cultivation such a close, intimate relationship seems to me an important goal for the future.

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