CEP 2000: New Directions in Programme Implementation.

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Introduction

In a bid to expose students entering the college to English language education, Heian Junior Women’s College in 1995 initiated a skills based language programme which accentuated fluency over accuracy. The ‘Communicative English Programme’ (otherwise known as CEP) consisting of Oral Communication, Listening, Reading, Writing, Basic Grammar & Vocabulary, and CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) classes. The pedagogic methodology is more skill than task oriented. Offering general guidelines that advocated learning activities loosely coordinated this programme.

Both an English proficiency test (The Michigan Test) conducted at the beginning and middle of the year, and the results of a quantitative/qualitative questionnaire were used to compare the students’ semester and yearly performance, and these results were used as an overall assessment of the programme. Results from this test illustrated many of the problems that students encountered and the CEP programme aimed to rectify.

The CEP teacher also coordinates through instructing the same students for all four skills - speaking, listening, writing, and reading - offering the students' continuity throughout the lessons. This kind of approach negates the need for coordination of subjects, and of teachers.

Much of the evaluation employed in making an innovative programme change, one that would provide students with opportunities to engage in ‘real’ communicative activities, which address ‘real’ national and world issues. Another of the primary purposes of the CEP programme 2000 was to give students and ‘English shower’; in other words give students an amount of English language instruction so profound, that they would be assimilated into the language.

The new CEP is both a procedural/task-based syllabus, and a process/topic group of syllabus.

Theory and suggestion for the implementation and use of process syllabi are particularly associated with Breen, whose 1984 paper provides useful discussion. He acknowledges a role for the ‘syllabus as a plan’, because learners ‘need plans in order to have a sense of direction and continuity in their work”.

But, he continues, the plan’s value may not reside exactly in what it shows or represents (it’s content), so much as, on how it is used in the classroom. Different uses are possible; for example, rather than standing as a prescription of content and its order of presentation, the syllabus might provide a checklist which the learner can measure progress.

New Programme Concept

The new English programme for Heian Jogakuin Women’s College is not a reclamation of a methodology, rather it has borrowed from other successful, tried and trusted methodologies, and from some newer innovative and promising new styles. This part of the paper elucidates some of these.

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Within the constraints of the old communicative English programme, or CEP, teachers were able to make choices as to a particular type of text for the classes they were responsible for. However, it was difficult to judge what language had been covered and to what extent. Even though most commercially produced text books are very similar in structure whether they are communicative, situational / functional, notional etc., with the exception of asking every teacher to provide an extensive syllabus including what language forms would be covered in their classes, it was virtually an impossible task. Moreover, many students were not clear as to the purpose of the lesson or the language they were expected to cover.

The new CEP restricts teachers to the kinds of topics they can choose to teach in their classes. It does not restrict teachers, however, further by stating teaching methodologies that should be followed. This kind of restriction is used in the hope that different teachers because of the restriction of topic choice would cover certain similar language items. In short, providing students with as many opportunities to encounter the same language and by providing students the occasion to recycle language covered in other classes.

Recycling is achieved through the use, and re-use, of tasks completed during class. By obliging the students to complete a task by using English (the approach used by the 'Talk' teaching methodology), we are making the completion of a task, and the use of English to complete the task, more meaningful. For example, a story retold in a speaking class as a story telling exercise, or as a short talk. Statistics show that task based instruction/learning, introduced into classrooms largely though the efforts of Canale (1983) and Nunan (1990), has exceptional success in improving students language proficiency. One possible reason for this is because the completion of a task gives the student a sense of accomplishment by finishing the work. Apart from this, it also gives them confidence in achieving higher goals, while trying to instill a sense of responsibility for their own actions by completing the tasks required.

2. Same Teacher, Same Class

Many successful language schools or programmes abroad employ a 'One teacher, One class' approach to language instruction. The new CEP has made a movement for change to this manner of instruction. The suggestion is that the same teacher instructs the same class in speaking, listening, writing, and reading. As indicated before, one of the intentions of the new CEP is to offer as many opportunities to recycle language as possible. The same teacher instructing the same class in all four skill areas more than once per week means that 1. It offers more opportunities for language recycling through the use and re-use of completed tasks. 2. As the teacher spends more time with the students and they become more familiar with each other, the affective filter is lowered more readily. 3. It aids in classroom management. Students gradually learn to understand and carry out instructions more effectively and efficiently. 4. It becomes infinitely easier to coordinate between classes. This approach is problematic, however, in the sense that if students happen not to like the teacher, it can cause stress for both student and teacher alike. More about this can be read in a paper to be published in this same edition, by Blake E. Hayes (2001). However, this style of programme has not been implemented. Instead, Native English teachers teach speaking and listening, and Japanese teachers teach writing and reading.

The former style of programme seems to be effective in an ESL situation, but in EFL circumstances such as those here at Heian, programme coordinators decided that Japanese teachers could instruct students more effectively in reading and writing classes offering guidance on grammatical points, writing structure, and writing styles. Native English speaking staff could instruct more effectively in speaking and listening classes, offering
guidance in pronunciation, communication strategies, while drawing on topics, functions, grammar, and vocabulary for course speaking activities. Problems with class scheduling appeared to be one other major factor in not putting this method into practice.


To assist with material development, two Japanese and two native English teachers where employed under a special contract system. Although they are required to teach a established number of classes per week, one of their more important and necessary responsibilities is the development of materials to correspond with the topics (see appendix 1 & 1a) chosen by the CEP coordinators. One of the original concepts of the new CEP was to encourage the coverage of the same language points across classes by each teacher using the same textbook. The difficulty with this however, is, that finding text to suit the programme that has been designed is next to impossible. Except for requesting a publishing house to make texts specific to Heian's requirements, the only other way to ensure we can acquire materials specific to Heian's needs, is to produce them here at Heian.

Portfolio and Counselling

Apart from the many pedagogic methodology that the new CEP implemented at Heian Junior Women’s College in particular two methodologies that have recently drawn the attention of a large majority of people employed within the language-teaching world; portfolio and counselling, respectively, are being used on a trial basis. Neither of these two is unfamiliar to the teaching world. Art students, to present their work to prospective employers originally used portfolio, while counselling has been continuously used to assist students with their academic studies.

There are many definitions of portfolio assessment. Each definition however, reflects the way portfolios are shaped by the individuals using them. While it may cause some consternation to know that there is no single, working definition, it should also be comforting to see that there is flexibility to expand the definition of portfolios to meet a variety of needs. Allan A. De Fina (1992) gives a set of presuppositions about portfolio assessment:

1. Portfolios are systematic, purposeful, and meaningful collections of students' work in one or more subject areas.
2. Students of any age or level can learn not only to select pieces to be place into their portfolios but can also learn to establish criteria for their selections.
3. Portfolio collections may include input by teachers, parents, peers, and school administrators.
4. In all cases, portfolios should reflect the actual day-to-day learning activities of students.
5. Portfolios should be ongoing so that they show the students' efforts, progress, and achievements over a period of time.

Students and teachers use the portfolio as an assessment of the student. This is a co-operative process whereby the student mediates (see work by L. S. Vygotsky 1896-1934) with the teacher and plays an active part in decision making for the grade they will receive. Students are encouraged, then, to take and play an active part in their learning and the grade they are given.

This is used in conjunction with standard tests to assess the students. Standardized tests may be ubiquitous, but the numbers they produce do not constitute a comprehensive system for assessing progress of adult learners. This is another important reason why the portfolio system has been adopted. For further explanation of portfolio and portfolio management, see Yamazaki (2000).

Common Syllabus

1. Syllabus.

Appendix 1 and 1a show the whole academic year planned into weekly stages, while appendix 2 and 3
show the monthly syllabus for speaking/listening and reading/writing respectively. One of the features that is noticeable almost immediately is the re-use of completed tasks. It also shows the six topics to be covered during this term: Food, Travel, Gender roles, Health & Exercise, Work & Employment, and The Environment respectively. It also emphasizes the tasks and skills that should be completed during this week. This also corresponds to the monthly syllabus (see appendix2 &3) showing in more detail the tasks students must complete, material/skills that need to be covered, and any other work that students are required to complete for that month.

2. Transition.

When learning a foreign language it is often much easier to talk about topics that we have a personal or 'Organic' attachment to, or relationship with (Sylvia Aston-Warner 1965). For example, it is much easier to talk about your own family than it is to talk about fictitious families that are often written about in textbooks. Until the CEP team are able to complete suitable material to use across all classes, an interim textbook was chosen to help make the transition from a programme reliant on text, to a programme that utilised its own custom text. Two text were chosen, one for speaking/listening and the other for reading/writing in which the unit topics best reflected the topics chosen by the CEP co-ordinators as shown in the whole academic year syllabus (see appendix 1 and 1a). Teachers were asked to cover a certain percentage of the text and use the rest of the class time for testing of any materials made. Another important aspect of choosing a two-skill text is that the same teacher respectively, will teach speaking/listening and reading/writing classes.

3. Class Goals.

**Speaking/Listening**

Speaking: The goal of the speaking class is to assist students in developing their speaking and listening proficiency, aiming to promote language acquisition through student participation in meaningful communication by completing tasks and class work. As many opportunities as possible are given to students to become familiar with using English in the Oral Mode. This, however, is a concept not only used in the speaking/listening classes, but also the writing/reading classes. In the speaking/listening classes, students are provided with a list of tasks that must be completed during class time, throughout the semester, or after class, that help them develop confidence in speaking. For example, some of the tasks include:

**5 minute short talks**
Story telling (retelling of stories read in reading class or stories they have listened to in listening class)

**Short individual or group presentations**

10 ~ 15 minute talks at the end of each semester

Listening: One of the major goals of the listening class is to help students learn to listen to English effectively. As with other skill areas, using listening material containing language items that are already familiar to them helps to give them confidence in the English that they know. This concept is vital especially during the earlier part of the first term. Students are also encouraged to listen to as much English as they can outside of class time e.g. English CD ROM's, movies from the AV centre, NHK radio programmes etc. Suggested listening tasks include the following:

Listening to journal-completed during vacation time only
Movies sub-titled in English
NHK radio and television programmes
Songs in English

**Writing/Reading**

Writing: The main purpose of this class is to help students foster writing confidence along with fluency and accuracy. As with the other courses, by providing students with tasks to complete, it gives
them the purpose and chances to develop writing skills and confidence. They also assist by using an extremely effective writing tool, as proven to be in the past, the writing diary. However, the writing class itself should focus more on 'real-life' exercises and issues such as writing a resume and a cover letter, friendly and formal letters, request for information letters, and writing addresses etc. The following are a list of some suggested topics:

Writing diary (first semester only)
Letter writing
Movie/book review
Speech writing—to assist with oral presentations etc.
Short story writing
How to use a dictionary

Reading: By including more of the other 3 skills in this class the language already covered is kept active by recycling. As well as completing simple tasks such as keeping a reading diary or reading short newspaper articles, students should also be gradually introduced to more sophisticated reading material. Students understand much higher level material than they can produce so tasks that they are required to complete should be at first, not too linguistically demanding and gradually become more demanding as the programme progresses.

Information and exercises covered in this class are carefully organized to correspond with the topic areas chosen by the CEP co-ordinators. This ensures that all information throughout classes complements the other, reinforcing the other three skills and creating a truly integrated approach, while also allowing enough capacity for teachers to add their own supplementary materials. Essential reading strategies are also covered in this class such as skimming and scanning, guessing meaning from context, understanding structures and organisation of text, and interpreting the author’s viewpoint, just to name a few.

Students also learn to read by reading. If the material is about real life, interesting and not too difficult, students will enjoy reading and will be encouraged to read more. The more they read, the better they will be at it. This should result in increased motivation to acquire English as their own. The following is a list of suggested tasks:

Reading diary
Graded readers
Timed reading
Reading newspapers, magazines, brochures, advertisements etc.

The amount of material that must be covered during the year may at first appear to be overwhelming for the student and teacher alike. However, as has been mentioned before, products from tasks and exercises completed during and after class need not just be submitted for the class it was first required for, rather it can be used for a variety of classes, thus achieving the recycling of language.

Conclusion

The new CEP is still yet in its infant stages and programme/material development is an ongoing process. However, the general feeling toward the new programme is predominantly acceptable from both the gains in some skill areas shown by Shannon (2001), to the positive comments from teachers that are discussed in a paper published by Hayes (2001). Teachers do not operate in isolation, although sometimes it may seem like it when you look at the rows of closed classroom doors. Effectiveness of a programme means more that just coping with the successive demands of a number of classes and classrooms. We as teachers/educators/facilitators also have a responsibility to take an active part in the betterment of any programme we are involved with.

REFERENCES


Abstract: This paper outlines the concept behind a new, innovative programme recently put into operation at Heian Jogakin, a small junior women's college in the Kansai area. It attempts to cover comprehensively the co-ordination the programme employs and how students have become more the centre of the programme instead of the programme itself, and how
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<td>Short group presentation-Women’s roles in Japan.</td>
<td>Dictation.</td>
<td>Portfolio &amp; counselling.</td>
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<td>3 Short talks. Role-play</td>
<td>Listening to TV/radio broadcasts about health issues.</td>
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<td>Distinguishing opinion from fact. How to quote &amp; cite others work.</td>
<td>Essay on health problems.</td>
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<td>12 Job interview role-plays.</td>
<td>Listening review.</td>
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<td>Portfolio &amp; counselling.</td>
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## Appendix 2

### Food

#### Week 1
**Oral Comm.**
North Star (Text)

**Supplementary Exercises**
- Group Discussion-favourite food, restaurant, Recipe, etc. Talking about food you crave.
- Vocabulary, pronunciation.

**Listening**
- Listening to ‘how to make’....(jigsaw listening)
- Listening to a short talk on Japanese food.
- Dictation. Listening for gist.

**Self Study**
- Researeching about favourite Japanese ethnic food.

#### Week 2
**Oral Comm.**
North Star (Text)

- Intro. to new vocabulary. Pronunciation practice.
- Making reservations by phone (role play).
- Dictation/Short talk.

**Listening**
- Close listening exercise-listening to reservations

**Practice and preparation for oral presentation about Japanese/ethnic food.**

**Practice and preparation for oral presentation about Japanese/ethnic food in Takatsuki.**

#### Week 3
**Oral Comm.**
North Star (Text)

- Role play in a restaurant-giving and taking orders.
- Short talk about Japanese food. Dictation.
- Pyramid discussion about favourite ethnic food.
- Pronunciation practice.

**Listening**
- Jigsaw listening-listening to reservations. Review
- On Japanese/ethnic food. Dictation. Understanding
- Tv/radio ads about food.

**Presentation practice. Group presentation counseling**

**Presentation practice. Group presentation counseling**

#### Week 4
**Oral Comm.**
North Star (Text)

- Presentation about ethnic food. Student self Assessment. Portfolio assessment

**Listening**
- Presentation about ethnic food. Student self Assessment. Portfolio assessment.

**Portfolio assessment.**

**Background research for next topic.**
# Appendix 3

## Food

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<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>North Star (Text) (pp. 120-125)</th>
<th><strong>Supplementary Exercises</strong></th>
<th><strong>Skill</strong></th>
<th><strong>Products</strong></th>
<th><strong>Self Study</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Japanese Food; Individualized</td>
<td>Understand main idea and supporting ideas</td>
<td>Preparation on JF for presentation</td>
<td>Writing about what they ate yesterday</td>
<td>(15 min. in-class self study)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>North Star (Text) (pp126-128: Group Work)</th>
<th><strong>Restaurant conversation-role play</strong></th>
<th><strong>Scanning</strong></th>
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<th>(15 min. In-class study)</th>
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<td>Writing</td>
<td>(p 130-132)</td>
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<td>Oral Presentation on food (Group)</td>
<td>Writing about classmates pres.</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>North Star (Text) (p 133)</th>
<th><strong>Reading Ingredients brought by students. Recipe reading-individualized.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Scanning</strong></th>
<th><strong>Process paragraph writing</strong></th>
<th>(15 min. In-class self-study)</th>
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<td>Writing</td>
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