【原著】

Development and Evaluation of a CEFR-J Based Classroom Activity

Rebecca Schmidt

CEFR-J に基づく学級活動の開発と評価

Rebecca Schmidt

Introduction

This paper presents an evaluation of the development of a supplementary classroom activity, designed to enhance a General English curriculum for a university in Japan. At the time of evaluation, the curriculum was being revised to align with the CEFR-J (Common European Framework of Reference- Japan), the Japanese version of the CEFR, a comprehensive framework developed so learners could learn to actually use and measure their progress of language in a communicative way (Council of Europe, 2001). In an effort to provide supplementary materials for the revised curriculum, the popular game *Jenga©* was modified into a conversation prompt game, with prompts drawn from the first-year curriculum and correlated to the established difficulty levels of the CEFR-J. Using games or ludic practices in the classroom can accentuate a communicative curriculum, while also aiding motivation and reducing anxiety for language learning (Uberman, 1998). Thus, despite a lack of resources on developing CEFR-informed classroom materials, (Westhoff, 2007), a clear shared purpose of enhancing communicative learning exists. The current study was designed for two purposes: 1) to investigate classroom usages of the CEFR-J beyond curriculum planning, and 2) to provide students with CEFR-J-based communicative materials that provide opportunities for review beyond the main curriculum of classroom lessons and activities, in and outside of the classroom. Following the process of Action Research, this paper will explain the justifications and means of development, problems encountered, and reflections for future use of communicative-based classroom activities aligned to the CEFR and CEFR-J.

Background

The CEFR and CEFR-J

Using the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference, Council of Europe, 2001) as a framework for curriculum development has been substantially well-documented within a European context and is more recently emerging as a framework for use within a Japanese context (Morrow, 2004; Nagai & O'Dwyer, 2011). Such documentation shows that using the CEFR as a framework allows for continued development of communicative, functional-notional curricula,

while also encouraging transparency among all stakeholders, as it provides clear learning goals and means for reflection, which in turn aids in increased learner motivation (Council of Europe, 2001; Little 2006; North 2007). Despite this extensive documentation, there are significantly fewer publications on employing the CEFR to develop teaching materials, perhaps because the "authors of the CEFR were not explicit about its implications for classroom teaching," (Westhoff, 2007, p.676). There is a significant need for case studies describing the development of CEFR-based materials and classroom practices (Council of Europe, 2005; Figueras, 2007; Little 2007; Martyniuk & Noijons, 2007, North 2008), which is particularly the case for localized systems, like the CEFR-J (Negishi et al, 2013). Documentation of employing the CEFR at the tertiary institutions in Japan has been primarily limited to implementation at a language program level and is rarely CEFR-J specific. The CEFR-J was created to meet the need to measure progression levels of low-level language learners like those that persist in Japan, where over 80% of Japanese English learners were found to range between A1 and A2 on the CEFR scale. This scale was made for English learners within a European context where the overall range of English ability is higher than is typical for Japanese learners (Negishi et al, 2013; Mayor et al, 2016). Students at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University, the institution where the project took place, are typical Japanese English language learners in this way, with the overall ability level quite low (Bower et al, 2017). The first version of the CEFR-J was published in March 2012, just prior to the decision by administration in the language learning center at the university to renew the existing curriculum by aligning it to the CEFR-J. This seemed more practical than the CEFR, given its finer demarcation of ability levels and progression steps (Bower et al, 2017; Foale, 2017). The supplementary classroom activity of discussion in this project was created six months later for initial use in the second semester of the 2012–13 academic year.

Ludic Uses of Language and Motivation

To begin addressing the lack of resources on CEFR and CEFR-J classroom materials, one classroom instructor developed a project to develop a supplementary classroom activity. The game *Jenga©* was chosen since ludic use of language, defined as "the use of language for playful purposes" can be a very powerful resource in learning (Council of Europe, 2001, p.55). Specifically, 'social language' games seek to increase motivation at the learner level by aiding in the development of students' self-perceptions of confidence, decreasing anxiety, and promoting self-efficacy with regard to achieving learning goals (Dornyei, 1994). Dornyei (1994) created a framework for maximizing motivation among language learners, which broke down contributing affects into three components or 'levels', which include 'the language level', 'the learner level', and 'the learning situation level.' Games may serve as a way to enhance the 'affective aspect' of communicative learning at the learner level (Krashen, 1982 in Ojeda, 2004, pg. 38). A ludic learning environment reduces learner inhibition and increases creative capacity, while allowing practice, repetition, and reinforcement of the target language (Uberman, 1998; Moreno 1997 in Ojeda, 2004). Furthermore, playing *Jenga©* is student-centered as minimal teacher instruction is needed because students are already familiar with the game and they could play it in groups both within and outside of the classroom (in a self-access center). Such groupwork with classmates both in and beyond the classroom can further enhance the group dynamics of the classroom,

which in turn aids in increased student productivity and motivation (Dornyei & Murphey, 2003).

Context

The General English Curriculum

This project took place at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University, a small women's university in suburban Hiroshima with a student population of approximately 1,400 students. The project, conducted between the years 2012 to 2014, coincided with the first curriculum renewal cycle to align the General English (GE) course with the CEFR-J. The GE curriculum is a twoear course, where students study English with native English speakers twice a week in their first and second years at the university. The curriculum is designed and classes are conducted in the Bunkyo English Communication Center (BECC), the language center within the university, where the instructors are employed. The GE curriculum serves to fulfill the English language requirement determined by the Ministry of Education for the following four, non-language major departments: Early Childhood Education, Nutrition, Welfare, and Psychology. With the exception of Early Childhood Education students, who may likely need to teach English in kindergartens or elementary schools, many students lack motivation to study English and are merely taking the course to complete graduation requirements. They also tend to be of low ability, as is typical in Japan of students entering university with little interest in careers requiring English ability. English Students in the fifth department, Global Communication, an English language major, undergo a more language intensive curriculum than the General English curriculum and thus, were not initially included in this project.

Aligning the GE Curriculum to the CEFR-J

The goal of the first curriculum renewal cycle was to align the existing task-based, communicative language curriculum to the CEFR-J to provide more cohesiveness to the curriculum, enhance transparency among learners, instructors and administration while giving learners greater investment in their language learning through reflective practices, with hopes to increase overall motivation. (Bower et al, 2017, Tono & Negishi, 2012). The GE curriculum prior to 2012 lacked an underlying framework, clear proficiency goals, and clear demarcation of difficulty levels. Yet, as it was originally based on a task-based communicative English pedagogy that encouraged learner autonomy, the native English-speaking instructors already followed a communicative language teaching approach at the onset of curriculum renewal (Bower et al, 2017). All of the above factors made the using the CEFR an ideal framework for curriculum renewal. Moreover, the majority of students enter the university at a level below A2 on the CEFR scale, so using a framework such as the CEFR-J, which subdivides the A1 level into Pre-A1, A1.1, A1.2, and A1.3 and A2 into A2.1 and A2.2, was considered to be even more appropriate.

The Bunkyo English Communication Center (BECC) and The Self Access Learning Center (SALC)

For many students, their first year of English study at the university is the first time they encounter the vastly different pedagogical approach of communicative language teaching as most high schools in Japan tend to use a teacher-centered approach to language learning. The BECC

has many aspects to aid in this transition. The BECC was created in 2008 as a part of the university's plan to make its English teaching program more competitive and effective in outcomes. Twelve native English speaking instructors teach in the center and class sizes average around 25 students. Classrooms are designed with tables and chairs with wheels to allow for different seating arrangements, which has been found to have positive effects on class dynamics and motivation (Dornyei & Murphey, 2003). An English only Self-Access Center or in the case of the BECC, the Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) was created to provide a space to allow students to practice their English in a more natural way. In order for students to familiarize themselves with the center, students must complete four 'SALC Activities' a semester for 10% of their final grade. In addition, they can go anytime and watch movies, listen to CDs, talk with native speakers, speak with each other, and access materials to further their self-study of the language. There is also a game corner in the SALC. The small class sizes of BECC classes, classroom design and the already existing game corner with easy accessibility for self-study in the SALC provided an ideal environment to create a game as a communicative supplementary material to complement the curriculum and allow students to review the materials within it.

The Jenga© Game Project

As discussed above, the game *Jenga©* was chosen to serve as a ludic use of language to create supplementary material for the Freshman English (FE) course of the GE Curriculum. Essentially, each of the *Jenga©* blocks was associated with a level that matched a correlating color conversation prompt card consisting of a question or topic from previously-studied classroom materials. The conversation prompts were estimated by teachers to be of a certain level of difficulty based on descriptors from the CEFR-J's Pre-A1-A1.1, A1.2 and A1.3 and above levels. This was congruent with the FE language proficiency targets, which were decided by BECC instructors and administration to be at the level of CEFR-J A1.3 (Bower et al, 2017). The game was introduced in two classrooms to review material, although only about 75% of material had been introduced at the time the students first played the game in its initial year. Six games were created so that a group of 4 or 5 students could play, giving each student ample practice time. After classroom introduction, students were encouraged to go to the SALC to play the game as extra study. However, to ensure larger numbers of students would go and experience the game, extra credit was awarded to their 20% participation grade if they went. In the second and third years of the project (2013 and 2014 academic years), it was made into an official, 'SALC Reading Activity' for ability to follow written instructions as part of the cycle 1 of SALC materials renewal project to align with the CEFR-J (Foale, 2017). FE students in the GE curriculum needed to complete 4 activities in one semester for 10% of their grade. After introducing the game in the classroom, the instructor noted that playing the game again was an option for their 'SALC Activity' completion. At the end of the semester, students completed a survey asking them about their experiences playing the *Jenga©* game and perceived difficulty of questions.

Methodology and Research Purposes

Action Research Approach

　　The project followed an Action Research approach aimed to address the following two purposes: 1) to investigate classroom usages of the CEFR-J beyond curriculum planning, and 2) to provide students with CEFR-J-based communicative materials that provide opportunities for review beyond the main curriculum of classroom lessons and activities, in and outside of the classroom. Action Research is a common research approach in Educational academic research which follows a cyclical approach of identifying a problem, attempting to implement a solution to the problem, collecting data on the project, reflecting on the process and results, and evaluating those results to create a better solution to the problem in the future (Mills, 2006).

Identifying the Problem and Implementing a Solution

　　In this case, the problems identified were lack of resources on CEFR or CEFR-J classroom materials development and a lack of supplementary materials for students to review the year-long curriculum in an enjoyable way. At the time, the FE GE curriculum was divided into four thematic units and there was little spiraling or review of material throughout (Bower et al, 2017). As the decision had been made by BECC administration to align and revise the curriculum to the CEFR-J earlier that year, creating a review material which followed the same concept seemed appropriate. In order to motivate students to review and to practice the materials in a way that did not conform to typical conceptions of study, a ludic material or game was chosen to be that supplementary review material. In addition, creating such a game allowed the expansion of the SALC game materials section. Choosing a popular game, such as *Jenga©* which students were familiar with, served two purposes: 1) its popularity insured that students would enjoy it, which is important for it to serve as a ludic or 'playful purpose', and 2) students could easily play without teacher-led instruction and thus served pedagogical goals of student-centered instruction and learner autonomy which were valued in BECC classrooms and the SALC.

Creating the Game

　　To create the game, various questions or related discussion prompts were selected from the units in the curriculum and deemed a level among the CEFR-J speaking interaction and production descriptors the questions best aligned to. As a later mapping of the curriculum language skills indicated, spoken interaction and spoken production made up 48% of content in the GE curriculum (Bower et al, 2017). Thus, focusing on these skills was appropriate for a supplementary review material, especially given the final exam was a speaking test, comprising 15% of students' final grades. The following table illustrates ways the questions and prompts were selected and allocated, by showing some questions chosen to match corresponding spoken interaction or production descriptors.

Table 1: Example Questions and Corresponding CEFR-J Descriptors

Example questions pulled from the FE GE Curriculum	Corresponding Spoken Interaction or Production Descriptors
• What's your name? • How old are you?	• **Pre-A1** I can convey very limited information about myself (e.g. name and age) using simple words and basic phrases.
• What month is it now? • What season is it? • When is your birthday? • What time do you usually go to bed?	• **A1.1** I can ask and answer questions about times, dates, and places, using familiar, formulaic expressions.
• What time do you usually leave home each day? • Do you drink coffee every day? • Do you play tennis? • What is your hobby?	• **A1.1** I can ask and answer about personal topics (e.g. family, daily routines, hobbies) using mostly familiar expressions and some basic sentences.
• Are you good at playing tennis? • Who is your favorite musician? • What foods do you like to eat for breakfast?	• **A1.2** I can exchange simple opinions about very familiar topics such as likes and dislikes for sports, food, [music], etc. using a limited repertoire of expressions . . .
• Where is the best place to go in Japan? Why? • Where would you like to go on your next vacation? Why? • What restaurant do you recommend going to in your hometown? Why?	• **A1.3** I can express simple opinions about a limited range of familiar topics in a series of sentences, using simple words and basic phrases in a restricted range of sentence structures . . .

Some problems arose when attempting to sort questions. One was a topic might not fall clearly under a particular descriptor, such as, "What country is spaghetti from?" A good reason for this is such a question is not very communicative in nature and reflects some of the issues with the curriculum itself. Another was that the questions themselves do not necessarily deem the level of English which will be used to answer the question. Criterion is a very important aspect of the leveling of CEFR and CEFR-J descriptors and should not be ignored. For example, the only difference in the A1.2 and A1.3 spoken production descriptor for 'expressing simple opinions' is the criterion in the A1.3 descriptor which adds the opinions should be expressed 'in a series of sentences.' This indicates it is the way one would answer a question asking for an opinion, which would determine which level the question should fall and not the question itself that determines the level. Thus, when the level was unclear, decisions were made to sort certain questions or prompts based on the range of difficulty the instructors felt was closest to the descriptor level or the expected answer the students might give based on what was practiced in the curriculum. However, it illustrates how difficult it is to label a question a particular CEFR-J level when multiple ways of answering it are possible. Finally, there are problems with the curriculum itself, which had students having to give advice about problems, which is more A2 or even B1 level. For example, the prompt, "My best friend borrowed many DVDs but never returned them. What should I do?" is far beyond the A1.3 level. Thus, the final level needed to

be A1.3 and above. In the end, it was more important to cover all the main topics in the curriculum than to make a game that strictly followed the CEFR-J descriptors, as the game's main purpose was for review.

Once the questions were sorted into their respective levels, questions or topics correlating to Pre-A1 to A1.1 were written on yellow cards. Questions or topics correlating to A1.2 were written on red cards, and questions correlating A1.3 and above were written on blue cards. Purposely, there was no concern to equally distribute the questions. In the end, there were 78 yellow or PreA-1/A1.1 cards, 120 red or A1.2 cards, and 50 A1.3 or above leveled blue cards. After creating the cards, the blocks of six *Jenga©* games were colored yellow, red, and blue to correspond to the color of the cards. In order to match the distribution of the cards, more blocks were colored red, fewer were yellow, and the least number were colored blue. Once the game was completed, it was introduced in the classroom and then placed in the SALC. Thus, all students that participated in the project played it at least once, though preferably more.

Collecting Data

At the end of the semester, a survey was administered to all the students in the classrooms who participated in the project. Questions were asked to determine 1) how enjoyable it was, 2) the frequency it was played and reasons for that, 3) perceptions of how much it helped students review, and 4) levels of perceived difficulty of a selection of prompts. The majority of questions on the survey concerned this difficulty perception. It was important to gauge students' perceptions of difficulty as the sorting of the questions had proved challenging. In addition, the CEFR-J descriptors are designed to increase in difficulty so if the questions were sorted correctly, the instructors' perceptions of difficulty based on the CEFR-J should match the students' perceptions. In 2013, the survey for the 2012–13 academic year was administered, in which 48 students participated. Another instructor had her class join the project in the next academic year, 2013–14, and thus, 77 students participated. In the final year of the project, 43 students responded to the survey. As the game was added as an official 'SALC Activities' for the academic years of 2013–14 and 2014–15, more students than surveyed most likely played the game. Also, other classroom teachers used the game in their classrooms for end of the semester review but opted not to administer the survey due to time constraints.

Results and Discussion

Reflection Summary

Student feedback on their enjoyment of the game was positive, and it appears that the game did indeed allow for review of materials beyond both the classroom environment and classroom handouts. It also was found that teachers' estimations of difficulty of the conversation prompts did not always match the students' difficulty judgments, although for the majority of questions surveyed, perceptions of difficulty were quite similar and for the most part increased in difficulty as predicted.

Enjoyability

In order for the supplementary activity to serve as a ludic use of language, it should be designed to use the language for playful purposes and thus be enjoyable. The game corner in the SALC already had a *Jenga©* game and students often chose to play it, so it was known to be popular. Nonetheless, the question, "How enjoyable was the game for you?" was asked to confirm this and gauge how enjoyable it was with the inclusion of language speaking prompts. Data for all three years revealed as predicted that the students overwhelmingly enjoyed the game with 70.6% of students saying it was "very fun" and 29.4% stating it was "fun." A qualitative question asking, "Why did you enjoy the game?" also was asked, but unfortunately nobody chose to respond to the question in all three years surveyed.

Frequency of Play

In all three years of the project, the instructor played the game with two classes as a review game at least once with several weeks left in the second semester. However, in the first year of the project in 2013, students played it three times in class and the instructor encouraged students to go to the SALC to play outside of class. Extra credit was assigned to student's participation grade, which is 20% of their final grade. Turnout to play the game in the SALC was far greater than expected, with 83% of students choosing to go at least once. Of those, 62% of the students went to the SALC once, another 23% went twice, and an additional 15% went three, four or five times. It should be noted, however, that the instructor frequently and enthusiastically encouraged students to go and play as many times as possible. In response to the reasons why they went to the SALC, 55% responded that they went for the extra credit, but still 42.5% responded, "because it was fun." The percentage of students who said they went to 'study' was 35%. Students could answer more than one reason for why they went.

The first year of the project served as a pilot of the game so it was important to have students participate as many times as possible. Given the positive feedback and enthusiastic participation from students, a decision was made to make it an official 'SALC Activity' in April 2013. After playing the game in class in the second year, students were informed of this and encouraged to play it to fulfill one of their four SALC Activity requirements. However, given that the game was not played until after mid-way through the second semester, students might not have had that many more activity requirements to fulfill. They might have, however, played it before playing as a class activity. Despite this and the loss of the incentive to receive extra credit, turnout was higher than expected with 66.2% of students going to play outside of class at least once. Of those who went to the SALC, 27% went more than once. However, when surveyed why they went, 65% said they went because it was fun compared to only 42.5% in the first year. Nonetheless, fewer students (25.5% in the first year vs 35% in the second year) reported that they went to review the material.

In the final year of the project, academic year 2014–15, there was much less enthusiasm from the instructor about playing the game in the SALC. Also, it was not introduced to the students until the end of the semester as a review activity. Thus, it is not surprising that only 21.4% of students went to the SALC to play the game outside of class. Of those, 88.9% said they went because it was fun. This is a very positive result because without much encouragement from teachers, students chose to go and spend their free time playing the game revealing a high degree

of motivation that the game inspired. Regardless of whether their purpose was to study or not, they would have been reviewing material regardless of their intentions for play. Unfortunately, after the game became a SALC activity, an additional question was not added to ask whether students played as one of their activity requirements or if they went on their own accord, clouding the ability to fully make this conclusion.

Effectiveness as a Review Activity

Although it is impossible to say how effective the game was in truly helping students learn the material they were reviewing when playing, students were surveyed about their perceptions for how well the game helped them review. The question, "How much did the game help you review material that we studied this year?" was asked of students. Almost all students gave positive feedback with over 97% of students responding that it helped them review material either 'a lot' or 'a little bit.' More students chose the latter, but this positive feedback shows it was an effective means of creating a supplementary material for review. Nonetheless, the simplicity of only one question makes it difficult to truly ascertain its effectiveness as a review activity. It also was not the purpose of the study as too many factors in the way students learn and retain information exist. Regardless, it is important that most students felt it did indeed help them review material, meaning that they did not see it as a waste of their classroom or autonomous study time.

Perceptions of Difficulty and Appropriateness of Leveling

Before discussing results from the survey, it is important to comment on some problems of the sorting process for card level creation. In terms of the timeline of curriculum renewal, instructors were simultaneously writing 'Can Do' descriptors for the lesson content of the existing curriculum. The question prompts were created and sorted in October 2012, the same month that a workshop was held informing BECC instructors about why and how the BECC was using the CEFR-J framework and how to write 'Can Do' descriptors for the GE lessons. The mapping of these 'Can Do' descriptors, which involved an analysis of the level on the CEFR-J that the descriptors correlated to did not occur until February 2013, which was done by an expert outside of the BECC. The results on the level of difficulty of lesson content based on those 'Can Do' descriptors showed the curriculum was 17% Pre-A1/Al.1, 18% A1.2, and 19% A1.3. An additional 46% was A2.1 and above (Bower et al, 2017). These results are very inconsistent with the distribution of the question cards made for the supplementary materials game. This is most likely due to the lack of experience and familiarity of the CEFR-J and understanding of what content appropriately matches the descriptors of the CEFR-J. In many ways, the game was made too prematurely in terms of making an accurately leveled CEFR-J supplementary activity to match the GE curriculum at the BECC. The concept, however, in terms of making a game which sorted progression of difficulty into different levels still has significance, as does the attempt to use the CEFR-J as the means to divide those levels.

A selection of conversation prompt questions were chosen so that at least one type of question was represented from the game. Students were asked to rank their perceived difficulty of each of those selected questions in a Likert scale style of 'very easy', 'easy', 'difficult', and 'very difficult.' Questions were randomized, so to avoid students sensing the progression of difficulty and ranking

accordingly. Of the 248 conversation prompt questions created for the game, students were asked to give their responses for 87 questions. Although there were 78 A1.1 and below level cards, 120 A2.1 cards, and 50 A1.3 and above cards, students were surveyed on 32 questions pulled from the A1.1 and below level, 33 from the A2.1 level and 22 from the A1.3 and above level cards.

Overall, student perceptions of difficulty matched the levels of difficulty into which the question prompts were sorted. On a simple analysis, responses were analyzed based on the percentages that students from all three years labeled questions in the third category of the *Likert* scale, 'difficult.' Averages of these percentages reveal an accuracy in terms of consistent progression of perceived difficulty. The average ranking of 'difficult' of the 32 questions from A1.1 and below was 6.42%. Students ranked the questions from the A1.2 level 'difficult' 13.37% of the time, and the average ranking of 'difficult' from the A1.3 and above level was 22.74%.

Table 2: Question Prompt Card Difficulty Ranking Results

CEFR-J level of the Cards	Number of Question Prompt Cards	Number of Selected Questions Surveyed	Average Percentage Students Ranked the Question 'Difficult'
Pre-A1-A1.1 (yellow)	78	32	6.42%
A1.2 (red)	120	33	13.37%
A1.3 and above (blue)	50	22	22.74%

Asking about perceived difficulty of individual questions provided some other useful data, such as it easily flagged outlying questions far outside the average 'difficulty' ranking within their respective groups. Take for example, the following question, "Does your best friend go to university? What does she study?" which received an average 'difficulty' ranking of 13.5% despite it belonging to the A1.1 and below question prompt level, which averaged 6.42% in perceived difficulty. Although no changes were made to the game after its initial creation, such results could raise awareness to several potential issues. 1) Is this question properly sorted into the correct CEFR-J level? 2) Do questions with a follow-up question simply cause students to perceive them to be more difficult than if they ranked them separately? and 3) Has this material been covered sufficiently in the curriculum? Ideally, all questions that occur in the game would be asked to also flag particular vocabulary issues that cause students to perceive the question more difficult than it might actually be. For example, two questions of the same form asking students to discuss music genres were asked: "What music genre does AKB48 play? (Do you like it)? and "What music genre does Beethoven play?" The only difference in these questions is the musicians' names. The first question, asking about a popular Japanese Pop music group was ranked 'difficult' 17.79% of the time, whereas the second question received a ranking of 34.15%. Although familiar with Beethoven, many students are probably unfamiliar with the English spelling resulting in a difficulty ranking twice that of the popular band. Although it might be more time consuming to do the survey, asking students to rank all questions could potentially flag other vocabulary issues that are beyond the actual A1 levels, which have been established by the Cambridge KET and PET proficiency exams to correspond respectively to the A1/A2 (KET) or B1 (PET) levels of the CEFR.

Another change that could be implemented if the project were to be repeated would be to have students play the game and do the survey at the beginning of the semester. This would provide some useful data to help compare perceived levels of difficulty before and after material has been covered in the curriculum. As discussed above, it could also help flag particularly difficult vocabulary, so that instructors could be aware of the importance of ensuring they are studied if not already on vocabulary lists. Also, it would raise awareness of the existence of the game, which could result in more students going to the SALC to play it either for study or deciding to choose it as a SALC activity.

Conclusion and Future Implications

Curriculum Renewal Phase 2 and the End of the Project

In April 2014, a decision was made by administration to abandon the goal of reforming the existing curriculum to align with the CEFR-J and instead redesign the entire curriculum to meet target CEFR levels. Some problems of trying to align the existing curriculum to the CEFR-J that became evident during the mapping of the 'Can Do' descriptors correlate to problems instructors had with sorting question prompts into respective CEFR-J levels. For example, despite new FE curriculum proficiency goals based on the CEFR-J A1.3 level, too much of the curriculum was mapped to be at difficulty levels beyond this or lacked enough spiraling for students to retain material studied. Also, the lack of supporting materials, the single self-assessment grid and limited vocabulary lists made alignment difficult (Bower et al, 2017). This also explains some of the inconsistencies and difficulties experienced when sorting the question prompts into the various CEFR-J levels. During the academic year 2014–15, an entirely new CEFR informed curriculum was created to be commenced in April 2015. Thus, the *Jenga©* game project ended both in relevance as a review activity and as a SALC activity as the SALC was also simultaneously creating new CEFR informed SALC Activities as part of the second phase of curriculum renewal (Foale, 2017).

Reflections on the Project Purposes

Despite the issues discussed above, the project did produce findings with implications for the two purposes it addressed: 1) to investigate classroom usages of the CEFR-J beyond curriculum planning, and 2) to provide students with CEFR-J-based communicative materials that provide opportunities for review beyond the main curriculum of classroom lessons and activities, in and outside of the classroom. Indeed, one can easily use the CEFR-J descriptors to form supplementary materials, such as a game for review of a CEFR-J informed curriculum. The main problems that occurred arose primarily from the problems of trying to align the existing curriculum to the CEFR-J rather than using the descriptors to create a supplementary activity. It would be much easier and effective to take the speaking interaction and production descriptors of the CEFR-J and create prompts related to them for a game such as *Jenga©* instead of taking questions and trying to match them to a particular level on the scale. The same process of asking students about perceived difficulty could be followed to target potential mistakes in level-sorting with vocabulary, grammar and subject material. Also, the speaking prompts could include notes in the students'

native language addressing criterion like 'please answer in short phrases,' or 'answer with full sentences,' and/or with 'multiple sentences.' Including such criterion would ensure a more accurate alignment with the level of CEFR or CEFR-J descriptors.

Lessons learned from the project could be applied to creating classroom materials and supplementary review materials for both a CEFR-J or CEFR-based curriculum. The second phase of the entire GE curriculum renewal project was completed in August 2016. Currently (as of August 2017), the new CEFR-aligned FE curriculum has been taught for two and a half years and has undergone its first year of revisions. With lessons learned from the first *Jenga©* game project, more awareness and understanding of the purpose and criterion of CEFR 'Can Do' descriptors, and a new better CEFR-aligned curriculum fully established, plans for a second *Jenga©* game, which reviews the new FE curriculum, to be placed in the game corner of the SALC and for supplementary material classroom use are under review.

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