

【資料】

Creating a Listening & Writing Course for Third Year Non-English Majors

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1. Background

- Finding Our Feet: Freshman English (FE)

When the Bunkyo English Communication Center (BECC) was founded in 2008, its brief was to provide General English classes to first and second year undergraduates at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University (hereafter 'the university') studying a range of major subjects, mainly non-languages related: Early Childhood Education, Psychology, Languages, Welfare, Nutrition. From the university's perspective, the philosophy behind the program was to market English proficiency as a useful skill to complement their major skill; hence the marketing slogan read 'Plus English'. As for the more specific aims and objectives of these General English classes, while reading and communicative writing skills were included to a certain extent, the main emphasis was placed on developing oral communication skills, these being the viewed as the most useful skills for what were mainly non-English major students. The content of the course was largely based on the FE curriculum at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) from where the BECC foundation team (hereafter 'we' or 'us') originated. Hence the lesson activities were mainly task-based: the students had to communicate (in English) with their partners in order to complete given tasks. Likewise the course was divided into four theme-based units similar to those used in KUIS: Orientation, Japan, Travel, Relationships; with a fifth unit, Music, available for higher proficiency classes in place of the Japan unit.

- Moving Into the Second Year: Sophomore English (SE)

This sub-heading is perhaps misleading if it suggests that the second year course materials were created after a full year's experience of teaching the first year classes. Naturally we had to have the second year materials ready for the first batch of Freshman students when they entered their second year at the university. Although of course our ongoing experience informed the first draft of the SE Course, we were still walking into the unknown to some extent. Where exactly would those students be after taking the BECC Freshman English Course? Where should we take them next? The provisional answers to these questions led to the creation of a similarly unit-based and task-based curriculum, but this time the unit themes related to the students' major subjects: Advertising (Psychology), Education (Early Childhood Education / Languages), Learning (Early Childhood Education / Languages), Society (Welfare), Health (Nutrition).

- Taking Stock: Course Evaluation Data

At the end of the first year of operation, we sought feedback from the students concerning the inaugural running of the BECC FE Course. Therefore all the students were asked to complete an online survey to that end. The data was invaluable in the first instance for informing revision of the Freshman course. However, it also gave us valuable pointers for better integrating the Freshman and Sophomore courses, and subsequently the Junior English Course. Here I will focus on the data which was perceived to be relevant to the creation of the Junior English (JE) Course. When asked which kind of activities they would like to do more of (more than one choice possible), the two most popular responses were academic writing (25%) and communicative writing (22%). Meanwhile, 20% of respondents identified listening as an area they wanted to focus more on.

Based on these data, we decided to found the JE course on the twin objectives of improving communicative listening and communicative writing skills, thereby progressing from the mainly oral communication focus of the FE and SE courses into more specialized skill areas. The challenge then was how to integrate listening and writing skills effectively into a single course.

2. Course Outline & Creation

- Overall course structure & objectives

The JE course runs over one academic year of two 15-week semesters (see Appendix 1). Unlike the FE and SE courses, the JE classes meet only once a week rather than twice, for a ninety-minute session (i.e. one koma), and the course is elective rather than compulsory. Meanwhile a maximum of thirty students may join a single class. As for classroom environment, the courses are designed to take place in Blended Learning Space classrooms, equipped with one personal computer per student. There is an alternating focus on listening and writing, so that one week the students practice listening skills while the next they switch to writing. However, a key feature is the integration of the listening and writing skills classes. There are also minor elements of extensive reading and independent study, essentially to allow students to expand upon the classroom-based study.

In terms of objectives then, the course has two main objectives: first to help students improve their communicative listening skills, for example listening for gist, listening for details, and listening for inference; and second to help students improve their communicative writing skills, specifically writing in a range of genres including cover letter, creative piece, and magazine article, while at the same time focusing on paragraph construction as the integral element of each of these genres. Vis-à-vis the extensive reading and independent study elements of the course, the objectives are for students to not only improve their reading skills, but also to continue to develop their autonomous learning skills, by planning and performing English learning tasks outside of the classroom.

● Listening

In contrast with the listening materials used in the FE and SE courses, we decided to use a listening skills textbook for the JE course. This decision was mainly a workload issue, combined with not wishing to ‘reinvent the wheel’: creating high-quality listening materials from scratch is both highly time-consuming and resource-consuming. In order to choose a suitable textbook we first identified a selection of four listening skills titles from a range of major publishers. We then passed them between our teachers for them to evaluate each title using a specially made textbook evaluation form (see Appendix 2). We felt it was important that the teacher-body, as end-users of the textbook, should be involved in its selection process. Consensus was reached and the following textbook was adopted: *Sounds Good*, published by Pearson Longman.

The latter text is available in four proficiency levels, from beginner through to intermediate. In order to estimate which level would be most appropriate for our students we piloted levels 3 and 4, in other words the two higher levels. Employing four volunteer students from the current second year, we taught two mini-lessons using a sample unit from level 3 and another from level 4. After each task the students completed a simple survey (see Appendix 3) asking them to rate the level of ease/difficulty, and finally make comments on each unit overall. The consensus of the participants pointed towards the level 4 textbook in terms of a suitable balance of skill and challenge. We also considered that the students who would consciously choose to do the JE course would be either comparatively proficient in English and/or comparatively motivated. Therefore, we adopted *Sounds Good 4* as the basis of the JE listening skills lessons.

The next stage in the creative process was to adapt the listening resources in the textbook to fit the JE context. Since we were now happy with the level of challenge of the tasks, we considered the issue of timing: the textbook contains twelve units, each containing approximately 90–120 minutes of material. After subtracting the writing lessons, extensive reading lessons, and the assessment lessons, we were left with eleven (90 minute) listening classes over the academic year. Therefore we eliminated one of the textbook units, choosing the one whose theme was judged as being least relevant or interesting to our students.

Next, to downsize each unit to fit a 90 minute period, we considered which tasks in each unit could be completed most easily outside class, as independent study. Firstly, each unit contains an online listening section which provides an excellent opportunity for learners to practice further outside of class. In addition each unit has a TOEIC style listening task section, which can assist those students with English examination goals. Therefore, we plan to assign the tasks in these two sections as independent study tasks. A further feature of each unit in the textbook is a ‘Use what you learn’ oral communication task, in which the learners in various ways apply the topic and related vocabulary to a discussion or interview. As part of the integration of the listening classes with the writing classes, we decided to transfer that task to the early stages of the writing lessons, following a review of the vocabulary from the listening lesson.

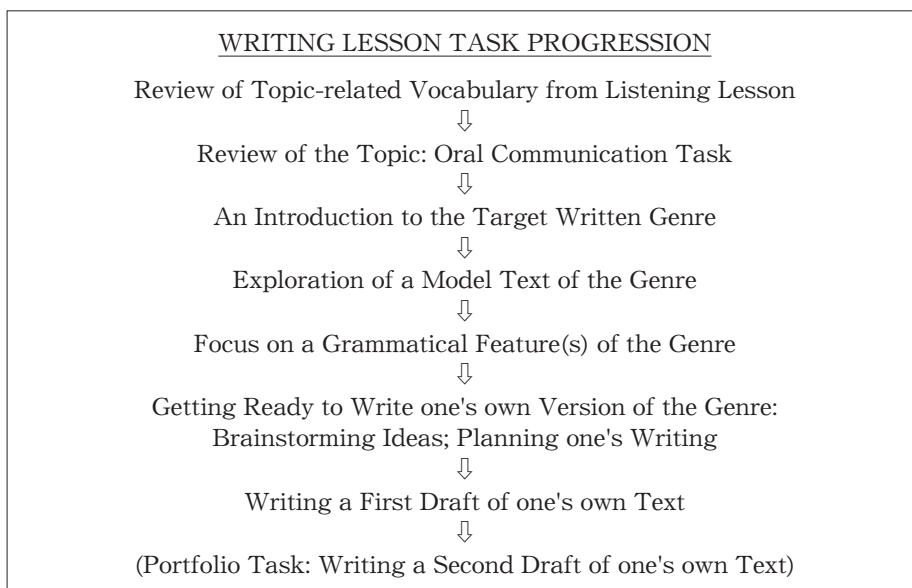
Finally, as part of the integration of the listening and writing components of the course,

we adjusted the order of the units in the listening textbook to follow the progression of the writing units, as will be further explained in the next section.

- Writing

As mentioned above, the FE and SE courses do contain elements of writing skills practice, for example writing an email to the teacher, and writing a paragraph describing one's best friend. Therefore we wanted to build upon these foundations somehow. We decided to adopt an eclectic approach combining elements of both the genre-based approach and the commonly employed process-writing approach. The benefits of the genre-based approach are its emphasis on the use of language in context, in other words providing learners with a purpose to write, and its emphasis on providing scaffolding for the writing process via model texts and a set of stages facilitating the learners eventual 'ownership' of the genre, in other words their ability to utilize the genre for their own communicative purposes. Meanwhile, unlike the listening lessons, we created the writing lesson materials from scratch, in the form of a booklet divided into ten units (one less than the number of listening lessons due to scheduling constraints).

Accordingly each writing lesson is based upon a particular genre in a particular context. As mentioned above, the writing lessons are integrated with the listening lessons and this is principally on a thematic level: for example, the theme of the third listening lesson is studying and living abroad, so the written genre of the third writing lesson is an informal letter home describing one's experiences while studying and living abroad. Within each writing lesson the general task progression is as follows:



To summarise the task progression of each writing lesson, the students reconnect with the context and language of the related listening lesson, then become familiar with the related target written genre, its purpose, structural features, and linguistic features, and then

apply the process-writing steps involved in planning and developing one's writing.

- Extensive Reading

As well as the two main objectives of the JE course, helping the students to develop their English listening and writing skills, we felt that the course should offer third year students the additional opportunities to engage in more freestyle activities outside of the classroom. We identified extensive reading as an effective candidate for this element of the course: reading for pleasure, using graded readers, is widely acknowledged as a valuable part of learning English, not only building reading skills and vocabulary knowledge, but also contributing positively into writing proficiency. It can also contribute to the development of autonomous learning skills, in that the students need to plan, and have the freedom to plan, when, where, and how much they read at each time.

Extensive reading programs are already familiar aspects of many language programs, and come in various shapes and sizes, especially in terms of the targets for how much the students should read per semester, how much choice they are given regarding book titles, and what, if any, supplementary tasks they are required to complete in addition to the reading. For the JE course we decided to set comparatively low targets for the volume of reading, requiring students to complete only two graded readers per semester; we took into account the fact that reading is not the main skill component of this course, and also English is not the main subject of the majority of our students, and therefore we were reluctant to overburden them with out-of-class tasks. As for choice of titles, we decided to adopt a semi-controlled approach, putting the students into small groups and giving *each group* a choice of twelve titles of suitably-leveled graded readers of a range of story genres (e.g. romance, adventure, drama). This allows for a degree of scaffolding (students in the same group can help each other since they are reading the same title) as well as a degree of choice. As for supplementary activities, the students are provided with a reading log template with which to record, each time they read, the date, how many pages, and their reactions and impressions of what they have read. They are also given a reading journal form to fill in when they finish each title; in this they write their responses to a set of questions about their book, and this prepares them for the subsequent classroom-based book discussions which take place halfway through (for their first graded reader) and at the end of each semester (for their second graded reader). These sessions are divided into two stages: first each small group consolidates their understanding of their shared title through discussion, and next the groups break up and the students reform in new groups to present about their titles and thereby facilitate the students' choosing of their next title.

- Independent Study

With only one lesson per week, the value of learning activities outside classroom cannot be over-emphasized. To this end, in collaboration with the BECC Self-Access Learning Center's learning advising team, students will be given the opportunity to initiate an individuated independent learning program with the assistance of a learning advisor. They will plan and carry out a certain number of language learning tasks and then

complete a brief journal recording and reflecting upon each one. This journal will form part of their course portfolio (see Assessment below). While teachers will encourage students to focus on listening and writing skills in these independent study tasks, we also accept that different students have different needs, so that some students may wish to continue developing their speaking skills (for example by speaking with a teacher in the SALC Lounge). However, the fundamental criteria for each task is that the students not only learn linguistic knowledge but also use it: in other words, they should combine acquisition of grammar or vocabulary with execution of one or more of the four skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Students will also receive credit towards their final course grade in proportion to how much independent study they complete during the course.

Assessment

A key concern here was to effectively combine end-of-course assessment procedures with ongoing assessment procedures; in other words, allow the students to show the efforts they are making during the course, and allow the teacher to show the students the progress they are making. Moreover, ongoing assessment serves an important diagnostic purpose in revealing problem areas in students' learning; and this is especially relevant in a writing course where students are effectively 'apprentice' writers, gradually acquiring and refining their skills. Therefore, as well as an end of semester listening and writing test, there will be a mid-semester listening review quiz, while for the writing the students will be asked to submit second drafts for a self-selected number of their first draft written pieces. The listening review quiz answer sheets and the second draft written pieces will then form the basis of each student's portfolio, which will also include a short book report about one of the graded reader titles the student has read, an extensive reading vocabulary list composed by the student, and finally their independent study journal. Naturally the student's level of attendance and participation in the course will also factor in their course assessment.

3. Looking Ahead

At the time of writing, the JE course has yet to be tried and tested with its inaugural administration. Therefore the year ahead will involve a great deal of ongoing revision based on feedback from both students and teachers involved in the course. Are the course tasks indeed pitched at the appropriate level for our students? Will the course content be relevant and stimulating to the students? How will the students handle the workload of out-of-class writing, reading, and independent study tasks? Of course we will not begin to know the answers to these and other questions until we meet our first cohort of JE students, and that is the most intriguing part, as the BECC program takes on its first elective course.

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Appendices

1. JE Course Overall Lesson Schedule

Semester 1

Week 1	Lesson 1A – Listening	SG U1: Self-introductions; biographies; dreams; life plans; getting to know you;
Week 2	Lesson 1B – Writing	Self-introduction (post to class blog)
Week 3	ER Set-up Lesson & Reading Skills	
Week 4	Lesson 2A	SG U2: Relationships
Week 5	Lesson 2B	Short opinion essay about relationships
Week 6	Lesson 3A	SG U3: University life; study abroad; cultural differences
Week 7	Lesson 3B	Informal letter home about settling into a new culture/environment
Week 8	ER Discussion-Presentation 1/ Grammar-Vocab Quiz 1 /Listening Review Quiz 1	
Week 9	Lesson 4A	SG U6: Travel advice and experiences
Week 10	Lesson 4B	Letter home about an incident you were involved in
Week 11	Lesson 5A	SG U5: Outdoor activities; schedules
Week 12	Lesson 5B	Itinerary for a holiday
Week 13	ER Discussion-Presentation 2 /Grammar-Vocab Quiz 2 /Listening Review Quiz 2	
Week 14	Listening & Writing Tests	(Use Listening Tests from textbook)
Week 15	Round-up & Course Evaluation	

Semester 2

Week 1	Lesson 6A – Listening	SG U7: Food, cooking, and being vegetarian
Week 2	Lesson 6B – Writing	Restaurant review article
Week 3	Lesson 7A	SG U9: Clothes, fashion history and trends
Week 4	Lesson 7B	Article about fashion/lifestyle in Japan (trends/influences)
Week 5	ER Discussion-Presentation 3/ Grammar-Vocab Quiz 3 /Listening Review Quiz 3	
Week 6	Lesson 8A	SG U11: Natural disasters and heroic acts
Week 7	Lesson 8B	Creative piece: recounting an experience of a natural disaster/ heroic act
Week 8	Lesson 9A	SG U10: Jobs, careers and skills
Week 9	Lesson 9B	Cover letter (& <i>resume if time</i>) for a job application
Week 10	Lesson 10A	SG U12: Dilemmas, responsibilities and life choices
Week 11	Lesson 10B	Responding with advice to a blog whose author is experiencing a dilemma
Week 12	ER Discussion-Presentation 4/ Grammar-Vocab Quiz 4 /Listening Review Quiz 4	
Week 13	Listening & Writing Tests	(Use Listening Tests from textbook)
Week 14	Round-up & Course Evaluation	
Week 15	Round-up & Course Evaluation	

2. Listening Textbook Evaluation Form for Teachers
Comments on new Listening textbooks

Please use the following scale to rate the books: 0—not at all → 5—absolutely YES!

In addition, feel free to include written comments, in addition to giving ratings, in the extra space in the boxes below.

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4
Content reflects themes relevant to Ss from the various Bunkyo departments				
Content is likely to interest 3 rd year BECC Ss				
Content is appropriate for our Ss' age				
Language is at appropriate level for 3 rd year BECC students				
There are a range of accents in the listening texts, including American				
Task instructions & procedure are easy for Ss to follow				
Layout is attractive and uncluttered				
Has adequate and interesting pre-listening and post-listening activities				
Incorporates grammar/vocab skills				
Listening activities can be done online				
Other comments				

Note: not all items in the table are of equal weight

3. Listening Textbook Task Evaluation Form for Students

Listening Textbooks for BECC 3rd Year General English Course

Student feedback form

(After each task, circle how you feel about the task – at the end, write any general comments about each textbook's level 😊)

Task	“Stay” Unit	“Problem” Unit
Learn the language	Too easy - A little easy – A good challenge – Too difficult	Too easy - A little easy – A good challenge – Too difficult
Focus	Too easy - A little easy – A good challenge – Too difficult	Too easy - A little easy – A good challenge – Too difficult
Listening Task 1 A	Too easy - A little easy – A good challenge – Too difficult	Too easy - A little easy – A good challenge – Too difficult
Listening Task 1 B	Too easy - A little easy – A good challenge – Too difficult	Too easy - A little easy – A good challenge – Too difficult
Overall comments		