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An analysis of some specific background factors influencing communicative curriculum design and development: an Environmental Science Case Study

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Abstract
This paper initially summarizes and later analyses several background factors to curriculum design in Communication I and II based on Alexander's Framework. Looking at factors, such as the institutional context, student's motivation, as well as tensions between specified, enacted and experienced curricula, the author evaluates his current and former communicative curricula and proposes areas which can be altered and amplified, particularly in the textbook arena. The new curriculum will be enacted from the Autumn Semester 2004, and feedback from the initiatives are forthcoming.

Note: This article is drawn from data gathered for a post-graduate research thesis submitted to the Open University, London.

Keywords: communicative curriculum, dialectic debate, textbook, environmental ethics

In this paper a specific area of a specified curriculum shall be highlighted, and analysed as enacted in the classroom and experienced by the learners. Taking the curriculum setting as a starting point, this paper will start to explore the process through which an Language Communication AI and AII (largely focusing on debating) can be transformed into a Constructivist learning domain, where knowledge is built by active learners rather than parcelled out piecemeal by an expert for the students to digest passively. In this way I can explore in detail my former practice and face the challenges I set myself when redesigning the syllabus. These challenges are not only purely pedagogical or personal, but include intra- and super-institutional factors.

(i) Analysis of the setting
The setting is an integral and essential part of learning and consequently of what is learned. Identifying and appreciating the current setting is therefore a prerequisite of improvement through change. I will analyse my own setting, using the following six pedagogical dimensions: educational goals, properties / kinds of knowledge, roles / relationships of teacher and learner, learning purposes, learning and assessment activities, and discourse. Below I analyse the setting along similar lines used by Leach, et al. (2000 p163). The basic categories are educational goals, the nature of the specified knowledge to be taught, the roles and
relationships of teachers and learners, the latter's learning objectives, and the instructors learning and assessment activities (summative and formative). Finally language as the teaching medium should be considered in terms of discourse.

The key educational systemic goal at the tertiary level in Japan is to raise universally well-rounded educated people with specialist knowledge. For centuries, the Japanese cultural view of an educated person was based on someone able to study new knowledge from abroad in another language. During the Isolationist Edo period this study was known as Rangaku (Dutch letters) since western trade was exclusively dealt with through the Dutch in Nagasaki, and when constitutional monarchy and limited democracy were introduced over a century ago under the Meiji Restoration, the emphasis switched to British and American Studies in English. Even today, all students in tertiary level education are demanded to complete courses in English (or in some rare cases a language besides English) to graduate (Matsuda 2000).

At most universities but particularly at National Universities like Nagasaki University, academic excellence is emphasized over practical skills, causing similar epistemological issues discussed by Lewis (1999 pp130). Ironically, as indicated above, an academic is defined as someone with practical English skills, but English is learnt academically (through grammar-translation methods) rather than practically. Japan's modest record in international language tests such as TOEIC and TOEFL is a source of embarrassment at the personal as well as political level. The Government ploughs billions of dollars through tax subsidies and international exchange deals (such as the Japan Exchange Teaching Scheme) in English language education hoping to build up a momentum. This is especially true in the arena of Environmental Science, which the government is promoting at the international policy level.

Matsuda (2000) states that "The Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES) in Nagasaki University, was made by the merging of Science and Liberal Arts in 1997 as a new field, since society has come to recognise the importance of impending problems regarding environmental issues in the future". Personally I would look beyond our own institution to look at the popular and political support in Japan for Environmentalism in recent times. Politically, Clause 9 of the Post War Constitution bans use of military force so Japanese government needs other instruments for international cooperation. Japan has a huge ODA budget to effect this and regularly contributes to NGOs and developing countries. The reasons for this may not be purely altruistic, since the Kyoto Protocol was one instrument the Japanese Foreign Office have been accused of using to contain (competing) developing countries growth. China is seen here as a potential environmental disaster, as was Chernobyl. Also The Foreign Office is often accused of using ODA grants to influence international policy through third world votes in international commissions, notably recently with the issue of whaling rights. At the more popular level, Japan's post-war growth was largely fuelled at the cost of the environment and pork-barrelling economic policies. Despite the recent slowdown in economic growth, a prosperous Japan now looks to the eco-friendly Scandinavians as role models for the future: countries which combine a high standard of living with environmentalism and social justice. So one ambition at Nagasaki University's Environment Faculty is produce respected NGO officers and academics who can participate in the international arena and demonstrate world leadership in Environment Policy. Obviously spoken English ability plays a pivotal role in such a strategy. This contrasts clearly with the United States described by Soudien (1999 pp230) where curriculum is embedded in a discourse of domestic multiculturalism, Japanese English education is targeted towards creating a post-Industrial society which can participate in Globalisation.

Matsuda (2000) suggests that the faculty are pushing for more effective delivery of skill-based programmes to build educated shakajin (educated
graduates to move into industry). However, as there are no formal top down stipulations beyond this, all the lecturers are given room to interpret the definition of an educated person freely. I am aiming to raise confident practitioners of Environmental Science who are comfortable reading academic level texts in English and debating the merits of the content in public within a Socratic / dialectical debate framework. To effect this I will have to encourage new study habits and develop student self-esteem so that they are able to take risks (by choosing a side in an argument) and apply the knowledge of their subject in an honest, principled, well balanced yet critical way. This means as a class we can expect to explore areas of environmental ethics.

The nature of the specified specialist knowledge is more problematic. The need is for a compromise between the search for understanding, the acquisition of essential knowledge and skills, the development of positive attitudes and the opportunity for positive action. Knowledge includes disparate items such as environmental facts, vocabulary, as well as experience of the debating process. The need to weigh environmental issues against practical criteria means that the students have to have a firm grasp of environmental ethics, a point regularly made in the course textbook (Takada 2003). I emphasize the connection between subject-specific knowledge and transdisciplinary skills and themes through the formerly enacted curriculum. Many students move on to careers in local government and business and I hope that they will be able to take the benefit of the course with them.

The way teachers and learners interact within the classroom also largely determines the extent and nature of what is possible educationally. My role as a teacher and my relationship with learners is based on a collaborative, almost collusive relationship to learning. Taking Freire's (Freire and Macedo 1999) view of pedagogy I am not just a facilitator or presenter of problems but a role-expert (expert learner, expert speaker of English, expert Environmentalist) and as such I need to provide direction. I strive to ensure that students are happy and feel positively about English despite negative feelings which emerged during an attitude survey conducted by the author (Sainoo-Fuller 2004a,b), where in some quarters there was hostility to the language due to the current political climate, America's role in the world, and English as a language of Colonialism. I am convinced that only then can they be empowered to take responsibility for their learning. Like Bruner (1999a), I consider identity and self-esteem to be essential as it is implicated in all aspects of the teaching and learning process, especially since in the Japanese-English language setting negative stereotypes abound, reinforcing the concept that English is too difficult for non-specialist Japanese speakers to master.

The students' personal learning objectives are key to appreciating their motivation. The author is committed to structured and purposeful inquiry as a powerful vehicle for real learning and therefore genuine understanding. The alternative is rote memorization to gain a certificate. After Shulman (1999), I try to understand knowing as "the process wherein one moves from personal comprehension to preparing for the comprehension of others, (these) are the essence of the act of pedagogical reasoning, of teaching as thinking, and of planning - whether explicitly or implicitly - the performance of teaching". They should be able to understand the other person's (Environmental) stance and respond to it in an ethical, principled, informed, critical manner. I want my students to enjoy deploying English as part of their true passion, Environmental Science, in the hope that they find a new incentive to take their study further independently after the course ends.

Of course the actual activities in the classroom and at the end of the course during assessment are vital. Assessment itself can be characterized as either summative or formative, depending on whether it is to check students' learning progress or to assess students' overall ability as an institutional function. It is essential for my practice that students...
have a clear understanding of their learning goals and what is expected from them. In the first class of the semester I take the opportunity to demonstrate on the blackboard how the teaching and assessment is structured. I reiterate my demands and expectations for the students, their role in the activities, how they are assessed, how I expect us to cooperate and create a learning-community, and what I conceptualise as a fruitful academic debate. Before each stage of the syllabus (former syllabus Table One, the new one Table Four), they are made aware of what we are doing, how it relates to them personally (in terms of personal and career development), why we are doing this and how I will assess success or failure. The assessment methods I am employing in this course draw on a broad range of techniques to give me a balanced view of my learners. Observations, performance assessments of presentations and role plays, process-centred grading (for example, the development from concept maps to speaker notes to final presentations), open-ended tasks, and finally through a two-part written exam (Tables Two and Three). As stated in Sainoo-Fuller (2004a):

"Following Murphy and McCormick (1997, p463) 'the nature of the task, the way.. it is presented and the way it is carried out by the students' must be addressed to make our task culturally authentic (salient). I would go further and insist that the assessment process must also reflect that of practice in the wider Environment community."

Although effectively everyone who attends the course will gain the General Educational Requirement credits, I give extra credit to enthusiastic participation, deepening of knowledge and the degree to which the student enters into the spirit of practice, by which I mean how much they start to look and behave like incipient international Environmental Scientists.

The day to day discourse of teaching, especially for L2 learners, largely pivots around the language modality deployed in the classroom. Language is the vital element for students to be in social and cultural interaction, whether it be Japanese or English. It is fundamental to each and every pedagogical dimension above. I try to emphasise English (spoken or written) as a vehicle for instruction, but will not discourage Japanese in the classroom where it aids understanding or facilitates peer interaction and scaffolding when the students' English ability will not suffice. I am interested in Lave and Wenger's analysis of discourse within a community of practice rather than about practice. Linguistic purists may suggest that English should be the one and only vehicle for understanding in a language class. I however contend that it would be artificial (non-authentic or non-salient) to expect a group of Japanese environmentalists preparing an academic debate topic not to slip into their native tongue, before stepping up to the stage to argue in English. By participating in realistic discourse, students make sense of the world and build their understandings.

(ii) Discussion of the former specified and enacted curriculum

Sainoo-Fuller (2004a and 2004b) explores the challenges faced when restructuring the curriculum in the past, away from direct method teaching and simple IRF (initiation-response feedback) teaching, towards a Situated context. As a consequence of this change in the spoken evaluation dimension of the course, the students actively used conceptual tools and consulted with peers as they found their own ways to solve their "dilemma". Time is allowed for students to think about the problems and to model, draw, write, and talk about their work. Students therefore better understand, enjoy and appreciate Environmentalism and the Debate process. They learn to value their own thinking and response strategies. The curriculum provides the opportunity for student to construct meaning, principally through structured inquiry and collaboration, and emphasizes the connections between subject-specific knowledge (such as Environmental vocabulary) and trans-disciplinary skills and themes (like debate), through inquiry. Continuous assessment provides insights into their understanding, knowledge, skills and attitudes.
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The major problem which came through in attitude surveys was the textbook, which they found unappealing, and though of excellent quality for self-study or for direct teaching methods, was not appropriate for a constructivist approach. The exercises encouraged thoughtful reflection on a famous environmentalist's thoughts and achievements, but denied the learner the opportunity to cooperate with other learners, or create meaning for themselves. There can be no legitimate peripheral participation when the only relationships present are the learner on their own / learner-teacher. So the key area to consider would be how to deploy the textbook interactively or how to replace the function of the textbook with a group project designed to stimulate scaffolding (Bruner 1999a) and peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1999).

In Sainoo-Fuller (2004a) I concentrated on developing the individual presentations, group presentations and debating areas of my Specified Curriculum (Tables One and Four). Recently in the classroom I have made a smooth transition towards what Sfard (Leach et al. 2000) would describe with a Participation Metaphor, when the students' past exposure to the English language was entirely through direct method teaching, and acquiring knowledge rather than deepening it. However, one problem which I have identified from the outset was the required textbook. Table Two and Three show the written exam which heavily draws on the student's use of the textbook.

As a glance at Sainoo-Fuller (2004a, 2004b) will show, originally I used the textbook as a backbone of the course to enable the acquisition of Knowledge (lexical data) and Procedural Knowledge (how to acquire lexical data). In groups the students tackled one chapter, and summarized it in a group presentation to their peers, allowing everyone the opportunity to ask questions. It tended to be an authoritarian top-down teacher oriented experience. A teaching rather than a learning curriculum, a point made in Sainoo-Fuller (2004a)1. To take these two issues into account I should re-evaluate my whole assessment regime to account for the change in the use (or even absence) of the textbook.

(iii) Identification and analysis of the main challenges for developing practice

Having carefully considered the setting and taking account of other participants and their perspectives, the author decided to shift goals in the first half of the semester from implementing group presentations based upon the textbook towards student led Environmental Newspaper projects and thereby further enabling students to make sense of their learning. Instead of an acquisition metaphor basis to the first half of the course, we could jump straight into a participatory context. To help with assessment and to develop metacognitive skills, we could document the process in a process-folio. As a group the students would build a newspaper from scratch, drawing on their extant knowledge of Environmental matters, and then individually each student could present one news story as if they were a television reporter. We would do this both at the front of the class and we could run it as a video project. This may well be quite a radical change as students start for the first time to identify learning as a dynamic process rather than simply reflecting on the contents of the textbook and demonstrating their progress through accumulating vocabulary.

This attitude is explicit in Freire's (Freire and Macedo 1999) description of the relationship between teachers and learners as one of critical co-investigation, supporting meaning-making. This aims at helping students develop their own narrative on learning, knowledge, assessment and the teacher-learner-subject relationship. The Environmental Newspaper is a way for students to reflect individually and in groups on a learning process described by Rogoff (1999) as a transformation of identity occurring through participation in communal activity. This will represent a radical change in my teaching, as it

1 In terms of Sfard's metaphors, the intention is to start off with an acquisition model to approach vocab-learning in the early stages (so the students can use guided interaction from the expert-teacher to explore their ZPD potential) before moving on to concentrate heavily on the participation model, where the students and teacher work together in an authentic environment to scaffold knowledge (Bruner 1999a)
means working on developing some acute self-reflection skills throughout the semester, changing how we deploy the textbook. Furthermore, it also impacts heavily on my written exam and assessment regime. Instead of group presentations summarizing a chapter from the textbook, student-led mini-conferences will be initiated during which students are able to demonstrate their learning to me and their peers, using the Environmental Newspaper. Through this process we think about how to present environmental issues in print and media, build vocabulary, and consider the importance and impact of articulating environmental issues through different types of media in the English language. This is a way, following Bruner (1999b), for us to ‘think explicitly about our folk psychological assumptions’. Last year we relied heavily on the textbook. There were clear challenges for the students, in terms of assimilating vocabulary, preparing summaries and standing up to give oral presentations in front of their peers. In the new course, I shall expect to be able to push them one step further by having my students understand, through their implementation of assessment, reflection and goal-setting, that learning is a process and that they need to be self-directed, learners during this process. This setting is the basis for them to become self-directed life-long learners of English for Environmental Science. This should also be a challenge for me as a teacher as it involves guiding students towards deeper understanding of study through a metacognitive awareness.

Taking Alexander’s framework (Alexander 1992, p184), by focusing on giving an increasingly active role to the learners in assessing their learning and setting goals for themselves, I am not only placing the learners in the centre of their learning but also allowing the experienced curriculum to help shape both the enacted and specified curriculum. This dynamic process is essential to improve teaching and therefore help the instructor support more efficiently the students’ learning. One no longer has to rely on the textbook to spoon-feed vocabulary and structures to the students, when they can go out and find meaningful words for themselves.

Change needs to be planned and implemented in a favourable context. A central point in Bruner (1999a) is that instructors who want to make pedagogical changes must find a way to present these changes diplomatically to colleagues and their students, in support of the chosen pedagogy. There still is of course a process of negotiation with resources (e.g. computer facilities and textbook usage in the future) and territories being disputed between different interest groups as described by McCormick (1999). Students on the other hand are always very enthusiastic to try something novel, especially when it means that they can work together and make sense of something new.

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Tables

**Table One**

2004 Sebastian Sainoo-Fuller's Former Published Syllabus for the Faculty of Environmental Science University Handbook: i.e. The Former Specified Curriculum

**Language Communication A1 and A2**

This course is aimed at developing students' communicative ability, focusing on current Environment Issues. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to negotiate, debate and offer environmental solutions to an international audience.

Individual presentational skills, group debate skills, and academic presentational skills will be emphasized and examined through coursework that will contribute towards the final examination score.

**授業のねらい**

The main reading text will be *Echoes of the Environment* (Tsurumi Shoten 2001, 2nd Edition). The students will be expected to do some reading outside class which will form the background for classwork. Using this text as a starting point students will be expected to gather together and introduce their own thoughts to the class. Students will give short individual presentations in the first half of the course, moving on to group presentations and finally debate. Although some basic English ability is assumed, examination criteria will be based on the ability to compose thoughts logically and present them in an informed, interesting and persuasive manner in English. Extra credit will be given to students who respond to other students' presentations in a thoughtful and stimulating manner. Although improvement in student's English ability is expected, students' development and participation will factor highly in the final grade.

**授業内容と方法**

**授業計画**

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<td>第二回</td>
<td>Introduction to Group Presentations in English</td>
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<td>第三回</td>
<td>Group Presentations (Textbook Chapter Presentation)</td>
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<td>第四回</td>
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<td>第五回</td>
<td>Group Presentations (Textbook Chapter Presentation)</td>
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Sebastian Sainoo-Fuller

Table Two

The written Exam part A. Questions and sample responses

Question paper

Japanese to English Environment Science Vocabulary Quiz. 15 minutes. This section is marked out of 10. Thanks to the bonus acronym section all the students scored highly in this section (many scoring over full marks). Vocabulary is important, but I am hoping to develop self esteem (Bruner) rather than memorization skills. Importantly, in Part B the students may use their textbooks and dictionaries.

Part A Vocabulary

From the following 33 words choose only 10 and translate them into English. No dictionaries

Chapters 1-5

<table>
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<th>Japanese</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tr>
<td>環境問題</td>
<td>environment issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>経済発展（成長）</td>
<td>economic development (growth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>公害対策技術</td>
<td>pollution control technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>酸性雨</td>
<td>acid rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>持続可能な開発</td>
<td>sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>化石燃料</td>
<td>fossil fuels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>共同実施という方法</td>
<td>joint methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>温室効果ガスの排出</td>
<td>greenhouse gas emissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>砂漠化</td>
<td>desertification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>産業廃棄物</td>
<td>industrial waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>太陽電池板</td>
<td>solar panel</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Bonus: What do these stand for?

- OECD
- COP3
- CO₂
- WHO
- NPO
- UNICEF
- UN
- ASIS
- AIDS
- NGO
- EU
- SARS

Table Three

The written Exam part B. Questions and sample responses

Question paper

The students choose 3 topics based on the textbook and write a paragraph on each. 75 minutes. Dictionaries, notes and textbook are allowed.
Final Exam

Part B. Essay Questions

From the following questions, choose only 3 and write a paragraph on each.

- What can industrialized countries teach developing countries?
- How can we manage the "Energy Problem"?
- Can we solve the problem of waste through technology? (p20)
- What are the social benefits of Kawaguchi's recycling scheme? (p21, 22)
- What is the relationship between Mass Production, Mass Consumption and Mass Disposal? What environmental problems does this cause?
- Why does Uchida (p43) think design is important to Environmentalism?
- Which are better, large NGOs or small ones?
- What are the differences between NPOs and NGOs? Are the differences important?
- Is environmentalism important to Japan's foreign policy? (Hint: think about the Kyoto Protocol)
- What is the Greenhouse Effect? Why is it a problem now?
- Why do Developing Countries mistrust the Japanese Government, according to Asaoka? (p14, 15)
- Ichida talks about "Asian Style Conservation" (p25) What does this mean?
- Look at Chapter 6 "Minamata Disease". According to Harada, why was the Japanese Government so slow to act and save people? (Hint: Is Minamata Disease only a problem for doctors? Who should have got involved sooner? What do we learn from this? P33)
- Chapter 7. According to Ichida, what are some of the reasons Japanese NGOs are not so active as those in the US and Europe? Can you think of any other reasons, such as differences in the way they receive money, or their relationship with the government?
- Look at Chapter 9. How is NGES different from other institutions?
- What are the differences between US, Europe and Japan in their attitude to Environmental Issues? (p50, and other chapters too)
- Look at Chapters 10, 11 and 12. What do you think Nature is?
- What is a Fossil Fuel? Are they good or bad?
- Which countries suffer from Desertification? Does this effect other countries too? How?
- What is Biodiversity? Why is it useful?
- Which are more important, human rights or animal rights? Why?
- What is a Civic Society?
- What is a well-designed product and how does this help the Environment?

End of test.

Table Four

2005 Sebastian Sainoo- Fuller's Completely Revised Published Syllabus for the Faculty of Environmental Science University Handbook: The New Specified Curriculum

Language Communication A1 and A2

This course is aimed at developing students' communicative ability, focusing on current Environment Issues. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to negotiate, debate and offer environmental solutions to an international audience.

Individual presentational skills, group debate skills, and academic presentational skills will be emphasized and examined through coursework that will contribute towards the final examination score.
We will build a Personal Portfolio throughout the semester which will be assessed. There is also a Group Environmental Newspaper project and each student will give an individual presentation based upon an article they contributed. The students will be expected to do some reading outside class which will form the background for classwork. Using this Newspaper Project as a starting point student will be expected to gather together and introduce their own thoughts to the class. Students will give short individual presentations in the first half of the course, moving on to group presentations and finally debate. Although some basic English ability is assumed, examination criteria will be based on the ability to compose thoughts logically and present them in an informed, interesting and persuasive manner in English. Extra credit will be given to students who respond to other students' presentations in a thoughtful and stimulating manner. Although improvement in student's English ability is expected, students' development and participation will factor highly in the final grade.

Lesson Plan

Orientation Explanation of Learning and Assessment Criteria
Computer Classroom / Former Student's work
Introduction to the Environmental Newspaper Project in English
Environmental Newspaper Publishing Group Business Meeting
Environmental Newspaper Publishing Deadline (End of Class)
Individual Newsreader Presentations / TOEFL writing handouts
Watch Video of Newsreader Presentations
Pair Presentations (Free Topic)
Gorillas In the Mist Video (Part I) and fun activity
Gorillas In the Mist Video (Part II) and fun activity
Introduction to Debating
Balloon Debates, Celebrity Debates
Introduction to Debating Environmental Issues
Debating
Student Portfolio Assessment Day
One-to-one interviews to evaluate learning over the semester and identify new areas of growth.
Short written examination based on Environmental Newspaper Project