

[共同研究：文学部での効果的な英語教育]

# Curriculum Change: Working with Teachers' Professional Knowledge Rather than Against it

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## 1. Introduction

The word 'curriculum' is often taken to refer to some sort of document concerning the content of a course or courses. Curriculum documents may be written by the teacher in charge of a course, or may be given to teachers by an institution. They may be no more than a few lines stating the overall content to be covered or they may be several pages giving detailed lists of topics, materials, teaching methods, assessment processes and so on. Nevertheless, these kinds of documents, however detailed, are in fact only a small part of any curriculum, in the broad sense of the word. Lawrence Stenhouse saw curriculum not as such a document but as a set of understandings shared by teachers of what they were doing (Stenhouse, 1977). More recently David Tripp has depicted curriculum as 'a systematic set of relations between particular people, objects, events, and circumstances.' (Tripp, 1987 p.7)

Similarly, curriculum change is not so simple as it might at first appear. A naive view has it that all that is necessary to change a curriculum is to draw up a plan and instruct teachers to follow it. This may involve specifying overall goals, more narrowly defined objectives, a required text, an assessment procedure and so on, or it may involve just some of these things. But if we accept the broad view of curriculum as residing in the social situation of the classroom, and think of 'curriculum', as all those things that go on in and out of the classroom which have an influence on student learning, then we can see that in order to change that situation we need to go beyond this kind of prescriptive documentation (though it may still be a good starting point).

Perhaps the most important dimension along which curriculum changes vary is in the extent to

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which they are led from the top or the bottom of an organization. Markee (1997) describes five models of curriculum change, and concludes that top-down approaches are the least effective and bottom-up ones the most effective. However, he points out that there is considerable variation along the top-down, bottom-up continuum, and he recognizes that solely bottom-up developments are not suitable for all situations. While it appears to be true that instances where groups of teachers spontaneously develop new ways of working, through discussions arising out of their everyday work, are indeed often the best models of enduring and highly evaluated change, it does not necessarily follow that institutional initiatives have no role to play. First, such grass-roots-based changes usually take place in institutions with strong support structures, and second, institutions themselves (as administrators and managers) are also participants in these social situations, and thus have 'rights' to initiate changes. The crucial point for Markee is not where the impetus for change comes from, but the level of consultation and shared decision making. In cases where initiatives are top-driven there is a real danger, some would say a high probability, of them being rejected or subverted (Gibbons 1989). Sue Hood, one of the designers of the Certificate of Spoken and Written English widely implemented in Australia in the mid-1990s, points out that to varying degrees, 'in resilient and resourceful ways [teachers find] that they can continue to do what they have always done [ ... ] regardless of the impositions of policy.' (Hood, 1995, p32) And it is not just a case of deliberate subversion. If teachers are not involved in thinking through the changes, and do not fully understand them, they may in fact be unable to implement them effectively. There is thus always a need for serious consideration of the ways changes are communicated, especially to teachers, and the extent of the support mechanisms and feedback responsiveness. In other words, curriculum design, even when it comes from the top down, if it recognizes the crucial role of teachers in implementing it, must take responsibility for supporting teachers through its implementation, listening to their concerns and acting on them. A new curriculum must have sufficient flexibility to allow teachers' knowledge of the real situation at the classroom level to have an influence-from the bottom-up. It is not too much to say, then, that curriculum innovations will succeed or fail according to the extent to which teachers in particular, and to some extent students too, feel that they are meaningfully involved in the process of change. (Mackenzie 2000; Menges 1997, Claire and Adger 2000)

It follows, then, that before we can change anything in such a complex social situation as a curriculum, we need to understand what it is that we are changing. In other words we need to talk to teachers and students to find out how they perceive these objects events and circumstances in the classrooms they share. This paper describes a project in which teachers and students were surveyed using questionnaires, interviews, and structured discussions to find out what was happening in their classes.

## 2.1 A survey of teachers and students of Bungakubu English Courses

The Faculty of Letters at Momoyama Gakuin University has been redesigning its first and second year English curriculum over the last two years. In the first attempt at reform, a committee chose a textbook and issued directives to teachers. No attempt was made to solicit teacher views, or to provide support in the implementation of the change. At the end of the first year it became clear that opposition to the text was nearly universal, and was expressed simply through non-compliance. The set text was withdrawn and this project was eventually set up to investigate current classroom practices. Teachers were invited to complete a questionnaire and take part in a structured interview focusing on their course design processes, actual classroom activities, assessment systems and rationales and so on. Following this, students were surveyed and interviewed in focus groups to gain some understanding of their perceptions of needs and the extent to which those needs were currently being met. This data is currently being collated, though the data which is in to date indicates that in fact there is already considerable innovation, experimentation and serious consideration of curriculum issues going on, quite independently of any central curriculum administration.

The questionnaire was carried out in the latter half of 2003, followed up by face to face interviews. Nine oral communication lecturers and five reading lecturers took part. In addition a questionnaire was administered to 251 first year students, and two structured interviews carried out with fourteen of them. Both teachers and students were asked about their objectives, and the way they realised these objectives through their course design and activities. They were also asked about materials, homework, assessment of students, and course evaluation. In addition, teachers were asked about the extent of their contact with other teachers, and students were asked about their perceptions of the amounts of English and Japanese used in their classes.

## 2.2 Data from Teacher questionnaire and interviews

### Learning Objectives

#### **Q1. What are your objectives for this course?**

*Oral Communication:* There was a wide range of answers to this question. There were broadly four categories of objectives: practical listening and speaking skills and motivation, vocabulary building, building meta-linguistic knowledge, and learning skills. All the interviewees aimed to increase students' fluency, and several (four out of nine) aimed to increase students' confidence and to broaden students' vocabulary. Five out of the nine aimed to enable students to give opinions in English. Five interviewees also expected students to be able to work in groups by the end of the course. Three interviewees mentioned 'speaking in front of the class' as an objective, and

two mentioned ‘having positive experiences using English.’ In contrast with the universal objective of fluency, only three interviewees mentioned ‘accuracy’ as an objective. Other objectives mentioned are listed in the table below.

*Reading:* There were three major groups of objectives: skills development, vocabulary building and awareness of other cultures. The complete list is shown table 1

### **Course Design and Activities**

**Q2. How do you design your course, based on these objectives?**

**Q3. What activities do you do in this course? Are they the same each week? Do you do units of work that continue over several classes? How do the activities contribute to your objectives?**

Most Oral communication teachers mentioned integrated skills activities: LSRW leading to oral tasks. The focus was clearly on creating opportunities for students to speak in class, and to build confidence and fluency.

Reading teachers mentioned a wide range of activities, with the most popular being training in reading skills through explicit teaching and practice of skimming, scanning, guessing from context, and doing exercises to build understanding of structure. Also mentioned were speed reading, reading aloud along with a tape recording, silent reading, and vocabulary building homework and quizzes. In addition, some reading teachers mentioned activities based on using the issues raised by texts for discussion or reflective writing. The Complete list is Shown in table 2.

### **Materials**

**Q4: What materials do you use in your classroom? (For example, worksheets, materials for games, materials from the internet, textbooks, realia, audio-visual material)**

*Oral Communication:* Most interviewees (8 out of 9) used one or more textbooks either in class or as the originals for photocopied worksheets. Similarly eight used audio-visual materials (textbook CDs, movies, textbook videos), and six created their own materials for games. Three interviewees used CDs as stimuli for oral activities, and two teachers used bi-lingual NHK educational programs for raising awareness of the importance of English.

Two interviewees used realia ( pamphlets, objects, booklets, visual materials from their own country, materials for games), three used graded readers and other reading texts and articles, and four used materials from the internet for vocabulary building and preparation for oral presentations. In addition three interviewees wrote their own texts.

*Reading:* Similarly, all interviewees used a textbook. A wide variety of other materials were used including other textbooks, audiovisual materials, worksheets and handouts, materials from the internet and articles in magazines or newspapers.

**Q5: If you use commercially produced materials, why did you choose those particular**

<b>Objectives. Oral Communication</b>	<b>Objectives, Reading</b>
<p><b>Listening and Speaking Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To improve listening skills.</li> <li>· To initiate a conversation.</li> <li>· To improve pronunciation.</li> <li>· To become a better speaker in front of a class.</li> <li>· To increase writing fluency as a means of improving speaking ability.</li> </ul>	<p><b>reading skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To get the gist - skimming. [4]</li> <li>· To retrieve information-scanning.</li> <li>· To read intensively for deep understanding.</li> <li>· To focus on main ideas.</li> <li>· To understand phrases and expressions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meta-linguistic knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To become aware of stress patterns in sentences.</li> <li>· To learn the importance of chunks of language.</li> <li>· To become aware of body language and gestures.</li> <li>· To become aware of communication styles.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Meta-linguistic knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To understand structure.</li> <li>· To break down sentences into chunks (meaning units).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vocabulary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To learn everyday topics, eg. "time".</li> <li>· To become aware of NS English expressions.</li> <li>· To reinforce classroom language.</li> <li>· To become aware of appropriate responses. in simulated situations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Vocabulary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To use learning strategies for enlargement of vocabulary (synonyms, antonyms, prefixes, suffixes, etc.). [2]</li> <li>· To guess the meanings of unknown words from the context.</li> <li>· To master the proper usage of key words by learning them in the context.</li> <li>· To understand idiomatic phrases.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning skills</b>	<b>Learning Skills</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To become a reflective learner.</li> <li>· To foster problem-solving skills in group activities.</li> <li>· To take responsibility for learning.</li> <li>· To be able to self-evaluate and self-correct.</li> <li>· To be able to evaluate oneself in relation to others.</li> <li>· To increase frequency of asking questions.</li> <li>· To be able to use the teacher as a resource.</li> <li>· To increase motivation and confidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To use learning strategies for enlargement of vocabulary (synonyms, antonyms, prefixes, suffixes, etc.).</li> <li>· To use context for guessing.</li> <li>· To use a monolingual dictionary.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Awareness of other cultures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· To introduce foreign language news articles at a beginner reading level.</li> <li>· To develop students' understanding of international issues.</li> <li>· To increase students' self-awareness through foreign language learning and understanding different cultures.</li> <li>· To understand foreign cultures through English learning and to heighten their interest in Japanese culture and language.</li> </ul>

Table 1. Learning Objectives

Oral Communication	Reading
<p><b>All interviewees mentioned the following:</b></p> <p>Oral presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· everyday topics which students can respond to in question and answer format or in oral presentations.</li> <li>· narratives, cultural issues, student-based interests and textbook-generated topics for oral activities.</li> </ul> <p>Project work leading to oral presentations</p> <p>Pair work for listening and speaking</p> <p>Teacher feedback to students</p> <p>Information exchange</p> <p>Discussion</p>	<p><b>The following were mentioned:</b></p> <p>Skill building: explicit teaching of and practice in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Skimming</li> <li>· Scanning</li> <li>· Guessing from context</li> <li>· ‘Chunking’-breaking sentences into meaning units for more fluent reading</li> <li>· Summarizing (in English and Japanese)</li> <li>· Sharing summaries with classmates</li> </ul> <p>Extensive reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Timed reading</li> <li>· Reading aloud along with a tape</li> <li>· Graded readers</li> </ul>
<p><b>More than half mentioned the following:</b></p> <p>Self assessment</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Storytelling</p> <p>Video and audio clips</p> <p>Internet and email (penpals etc)</p> <p>Warm-up activities</p> <p>Acting and role play (e.g., realistic situations to increase understanding of language appropriate to the situation)</p> <p>Journals</p> <p>Communication and word games</p>	<p>Intensive reading</p> <p>Comprehension questions (in English and Japanese)</p> <p>Explicit teaching of structure, genre, vocabulary, and background knowledge</p> <p>Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Quizzes</li> <li>· Home study (TOEFL practice)</li> </ul> <p>Listening to texts read aloud on tape</p> <p>Engaging with ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Commenting on texts</li> <li>· Discussing issues raised</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other activities mentioned:</b></p> <p>Timed conversations</p> <p>Graded and extensive reading</p> <p>Explicit teaching of useful phrases and Vocabulary</p> <p>Drilling and recycling</p> <p>Learning key sentences in question, answer, responses form</p> <p>Writing and then role-playing a prepared conversation</p> <p>Worksheets.</p> <p>Self-assessment</p>	

Table 2. Course design and activities

### ones? How do they fit in with your course objectives?

The range of textbook used is shown in table 3, and reasons for choice of textbook are shown in table 4.

### Problems with Textbooks

Course books Oral Communication	Course books Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>English First Hand 1</i></li> <li>· <i>J-Talk</i></li> <li>· <i>Nice talking with you</i></li> <li>· <i>A trip to Britain</i></li> <li>· <i>Talking together</i></li> <li>· <i>Topic Talk -Issues</i></li> <li>· <i>Communication Strategies</i> (2<sup>nd</sup> year students)</li> <li>· <i>Also materials taken from several coursebooks to allow for a topic based course</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Other Materials</b>                      Audio-visual materials (textbook CDs, movies, textbook videos), own materials for games                      CDs as stimuli for oral activities                      Bi-lingual NHK educational programs</p>	<p><b>5.1.1 Reading I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Cause and Effect</i> (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). P. Ackert. Shohakusha.</li> <li>· <i>Independent Reader</i>. Kimura, S. and Shimizu, Y. Macmillan Language House.</li> <li>· <i>Insights Today</i>. Shohakusha.</li> <li>· <i>Inspiring English</i>. Asakawa, K. Kinseido.</li> <li>· <i>News Break</i>. Takada, H. Ikubundo.</li> <li>· <i>The Powerful Reader</i> (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Beth M. Pachecol and Joan Young Gregg. Macmillan Language House.</li> </ul> <p><b>5.1.2 Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Clearly Britain, Clearly Japan</i>. T. O'Brien Nan'undo.</li> <li>· <i>Reading Shukan ST</i>. Someya, M. and Ferrasci, F. Eihosha.</li> <li>· <i>Skills for Better Reading</i>. Ishitani, Y. Nan'undo.</li> <li>· <i>Words in Context</i>. Miyake, M. and Miyake, C. Macmillan Language House.</li> </ul> <p><b>Other materials</b>                      Other textbook (s)                      Audiovisual materials (textbook tapes)                      Worksheets/handouts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· materials for practice in rapid reading</li> <li>· materials on reading skills and for practice in rapid reading with these skills</li> <li>· materials for checking students' comprehension of texts in the textbook, <i>Shukan ST</i></li> <li>· (Q&amp;A format)</li> <li>· worksheets to write in main ideas of each paragraph of the texts in the textbook</li> </ul> <p>Materials from the internet [3]  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Used as part of the background and expanded information.</li> <li>· Related articles are used. [2]</li> <li>· Info/materials on various fields (history, international news, etc.)</li> </ul>                     Articles in magazines or newspapers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Newsweek</i></li> <li>· <i>The Daily Yomiuri</i></li> <li>· <i>The Japan Times</i></li> <li>· <i>International Herald Tribune</i></li> </ul>

Table 3. Textbook and other materials.

Oral Communication	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· student-related topics</li> <li>· attractive, engaging visual format, which encourage the students to use texts</li> <li>· easy to understand</li> <li>· clear information that can be used for oral activities</li> <li>· flexible enough to allow students to work at different levels</li> <li>· Integrated activities (speaking, listening, reading and writing)</li> <li>· communicative games for pair work activities, (for lower level students).</li> <li>· to provide a framework for the course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· author's views and claims fit course objectives</li> <li>· covers reading skills systematically and comprehensively [2]</li> <li>· good for practicing rapid reading, vocabulary building</li> <li>· current topics which stimulate learners' interest; appropriate for university students; thought-provoking</li> <li>· appropriate difficulty level</li> <li>· variety of tasks</li> <li>· organization motivates students-sense of accomplishment</li> <li>· directions are written in Japanese (necessary for all but the highest level)</li> <li>· empathy of author with Japan</li> <li>· accompanying audiocassettes</li> </ul>

Table 4. Reasons for choice of textbook

Several teachers noted that it was difficult to gauge the right level, particularly since teachers were not informed of the level of their class prior to the textbook selection period.

### Homework

#### **Q6: Do you give homework? What? How much? How often?**

Most Oral Communication interviewees said they gave some homework (8 out of 9). The amounts ranged from occasional tasks (TOEFL preparation, completion of classwork, reports, reading or project-type work) (5 interviewees) to weekly assignments based on the textbook, or journal writing (3 interviewees). One of the latter interviewees required students to write 75 journal entries (5 per week).

Reading interviewees only occasionally gave assignments, up to five times per semester, but more often required students to prepare for class by doing prior reading, vocabulary study, revision for quizzes, or completion of unfinished classwork. As for the Oral communication teachers, the amounts of this type of homework varied between occasionally and after every class. Reading teachers also required homework associated with graded readers: reading at least 180 pages, and writing one or two book reports.

### Assessment

**Q7: How do you assess student achievement? How do you award grades at the end of each semester? How is your assessment related to your objectives? (For example, written/oral achievement tests, written/oral quizzes, participation and performance in**

Oral Communication	Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· pairwork</li> <li>· oral presentations</li> <li>· interviews (sometimes audio-or video-taped)</li> <li>· four to six units of work per semester, writing tasks (journals, emails)</li> <li>· portfolio (project, weekly reports, notebooks, self assessment)</li> <li>· quizzes on text book items or TOEFL-type</li> <li>· post quiz corrections</li> <li>· student self- evaluation</li> <li>· attendance and participation</li> <li>· pronunciation</li> <li>· tests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· tests</li> <li>· quizzes (vocabulary, TOEFL, textbook, etc)</li> <li>· reading reports</li> <li>· reading amount</li> <li>· attendance and participation</li> <li>· assignments (in one case only for borderline students)</li> </ul>

Table 5. Assessment

**class, homework, reports, journals, portfolios, oral presentations)**

All the oral communication teachers used some form of continuous or task-based assessment. Most used a combination of attendance and participation, classwork and homework, and some in addition used objective examination-like tasks (speaking tests for instance).

Reading teachers placed more reliance on tests (usually 65–80% of the final grade), but also used attendance and participation, homework (including graded readers book reports), and quizzes.

Assessment tasks and methods are shown in table 5.

In both groups some teachers used a point system which they converted to grades, while others, especially oral communication teachers, awarded only grades. There was considerable variation in the way these scores were reported to students. In reading classes there was mostly an even spread of grades from A to C, with some variation between 5% and 20% for D. There was around a 10% drop-out rate (X).

**Q8: How do you evaluate your course? (For example, questionnaires, comparing student performance at the beginning and end of the course)**

Interviewees used one of two methods of evaluating their courses: student feedback, or observation and assessment of students, or a combination of both. The range of methods is shown in table 6.

**Q9: Do you know what happens in students' other English classes? (For example, if you are teaching reading, do you know what happens in the students' writing and oral communication classes?)**

**If 'yes', how do you take this into account when designing your own course?**

Student feedback	Observation and assessment
<p>Methods of student feedback included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· University questionnaire (reading teachers only; oral communication teachers did not mention this)</li> <li>· Post-task evaluation questionnaires: rating activities according to set criteria</li> <li>· Motivation graphs</li> <li>· Self evaluation</li> <li>· Free-writing feedback through journals</li> <li>· Guided writing: "What did you learn? What was most useful?" etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Methods of observation and assessment of student participation and progress included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Observation in class: participation and enthusiasm</li> <li>· Comparing student work at the beginning of the course with work at the end</li> <li>· Interviews on video or cassette tape</li> <li>· Quizzes</li> <li>· Reading speed</li> </ul>

Table 6. Course evaluation

### **If 'no', would you like to know? If you knew, would you take it into account in designing your course?**

All interviewees said that they would value communication with the teachers of other courses. In reflecting on the aborted curriculum of 2002, most were positive about the possibility of communication between reading, writing and oral communication teachers (though not necessarily about the message book method, and not at all about the shared text). 6 out of the 9 complained that this was not possible in the current system. Some noted that their main source of information was conversation with the students, but this did not give them a comprehensive picture.

It was suggested that the one kind of useful communication was general information about what activities students did in class, and about what homework they were given. Another was information about students' performance, especially where problems arose.

Several teachers also suggested that some kind of thematic connection between reading and oral communication classes would be beneficial.

### **Other Responses and Suggestions**

#### **Course objectives and materials**

Eight teachers said that the Objectives (distributed by the Faculty) were achievable for students between upper beginner and advanced English levels, but it did not include levels below this.

One teacher requested a community access file for teachers' lesson plans and materials (contributed by teachers) with an indication of topic and application, as part of a lightly structured curriculum approach.

#### **Organisation of Classes**

Some teachers appeared to be unaware that Bungakubu students were streamed according to

the results of the ITP test, while others complained that they were not informed of the results of the test for their students individually, nor even the level of the class they were teaching. While some teachers used their own initial diagnostic test, one teacher suggested that a common test (made available by the Faculty but not compulsory) would be useful.

Five teachers requested that oral English class sizes be restricted to between 20 to 25 students. Twenty students was the ideal number for oral activities.

Almost all teachers would welcome more information about students' other classes, and especially reading teachers would like to see some thematic connection between reading and oral communication classes.

### **Content**

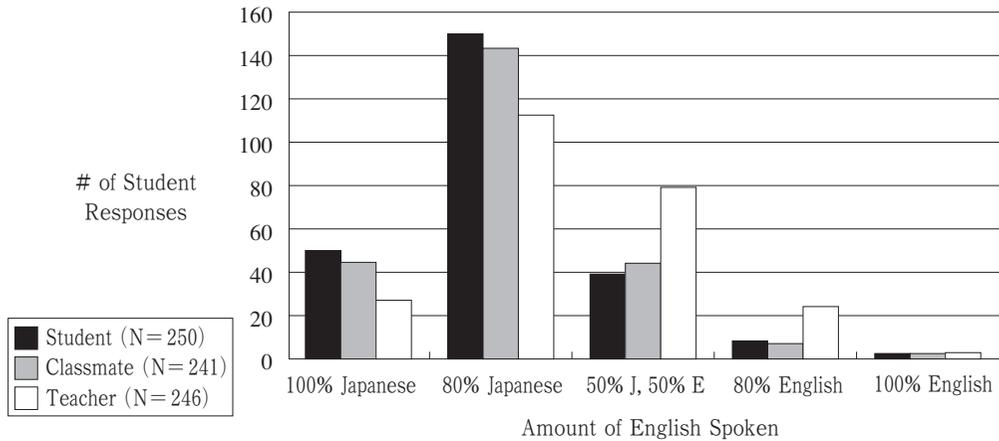
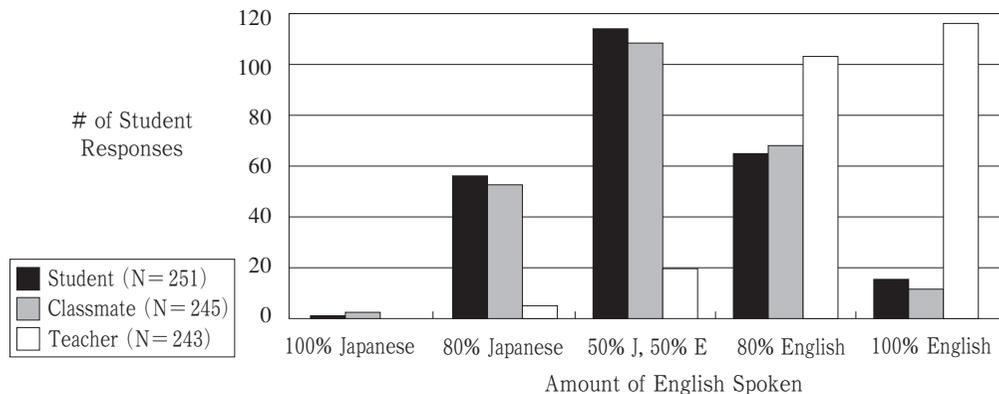
There were several comments and suggestions about the kind of content that best suited oral communication classes, shown in table 7.

<p><b>Comments about content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Specific purposes course components (General English, business, study, travel, and so on)</li> <li>· A mini skills package with the theme of responsibility to be used as an introduction for very low level first year students to be administered bilingually at the beginning of the course</li> <li>· Dictionary skills at upper beginner (+) level for first year students</li> <li>· Sequenced listening skills</li> <li>· Reading as an important part of oral communication: to provide material for talk</li> <li>· Learning styles important when developing lessons and materials</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Several teachers mentioned the importance of student input in evaluation, and requested teacher input into the university student evaluation questionnaire.</li> <li>· One teacher suggested follow-up discussions.</li> </ul>

Table 7. Coments

**3. Student Questionnaire Results Question 1** (Figure 1) asked students “*Which of the following activities did you do in English classes?* (英語の授業ではどのような活動をしますか。次の各活動のうち、当てはまるものにマークして下さい)”

For **Reading classes**, reading activities; translation activities; writing activities; reports; TOEIC/TOEFL preparation; and quizzes and tests were most commonly reported with more than 50 students responding positively for each of these activities. For Oral Communication classes, games; drama/role play; group and pair work; self and peer evaluation; oral presentations; speaking tests; parties and social activities; and pronunciation activities were most commonly reported with more than 100 students responding positively for each of these activities. In the “Other” (その他) category, students reported listening activities; music; and imagination

**Figure 1.** How much English is spoken in Reading class**Figure 2.** How much English is spoken in Oral-Communication class

activities for Reading classes, and listening activities; written journals; and textbook use for Oral Communication classes.

**Questions 2 and 3** (Figures 1 and 2) asked students “How much English did you / your classmates / your teacher speak in reading class? (READING の授業では、どれくらい英語を話しましたか? 他の学生は? 教師は?)” Students reported that both students and teachers spoke more English on average in Oral Communication classes than Reading classes.

**Questions 4, 5, and 6** all asked students about textbooks:

**Question 4** Did you use a textbook? (教科書は使われましたか?)

Reading	96% YES (使った)	3% NO	1% No Response
Oral Communication	72% YES (使った)	27% NO	1% No Response

**Question 5** Is it effective to use a text book? (教科書を使うことは、効果的だと思いますか?)

Reading	89% YES (効果的だと思う)	9% NO	2% No Response
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Oral Communication 42% YES (効果的だと思う) 55% NO 3% No Response

**Question 6** *Do you think it would be effective to use a shared textbook? (共通教科書なら (例えばリーディング全部のクラスで同じ教科書を使うこと) 効果的だと思いますか?)*

Reading 44% YES (効果的だと思う) 52% NO 4% No Response

Oral Communication 33% YES (効果的だと思う) 63% NO 4% No Response

**Question 7** (Figure 4) asked students *“How many times did you have homework? What did you think of the amount? (for Reading and Oral Communication combined) (週に何回宿題を出さなければなりませんか? (R, O 合わせて) また, 量についての意見を選んでください)”*

There was considerable variation, but the majority of students reported having homework about six times per term, about the right amount. The responses are shown in Figure 3 and 4.

**Question 8** asked students *“Do you understand the assessment system? (評価方法を理解していますか。)”* The majority of students (66%) reported that they mostly understood the assessment system (ある制度は理解している) for both reading and oral communication (N=245).

**Question 9** asked students *“Do you understand how you were assessed and how your grades were determined? (どのように評価されているのか, 把握していますか。)”* The majority of students (63%) reported that they mostly understood how their own individual grades were determined (ある制度は理解している) in their reading and oral communication classes (N=247).

**Questions 10, 11 and 12** all asked students about Graded Readers:

**Question 10** *“How many graded readers did you read this year? (今年度 Graded Readers を何冊読みましたか?)”*

Percentages of students reading graded readers (N=244):

2 readers or less:	11%
3 readers:	12%
4 readers:	17%
5 readers:	26%
6 or more:	34%

**Question 11** *“Did you enjoy reading the graded readers? (Graded Readers を読むのは楽しかったですか?)”* The majority of students enjoyed reading graded readers.

Percentages of student reactions to graded readers (N=247):

I enjoyed them very much (とても楽しかった):	5%
I enjoyed them (楽しかった):	55.5%
I didn't enjoy them much (あまり楽しくなかった):	31%
I didn't enjoy them at all (楽しくなかった):	8.5%

**Question 12** *“Are graded readers a good way to learn English? (Graded Readers は英語力をつけるのに効果的だと思いますか?)”* The majority of students felt that graded readers were

Figure 3.

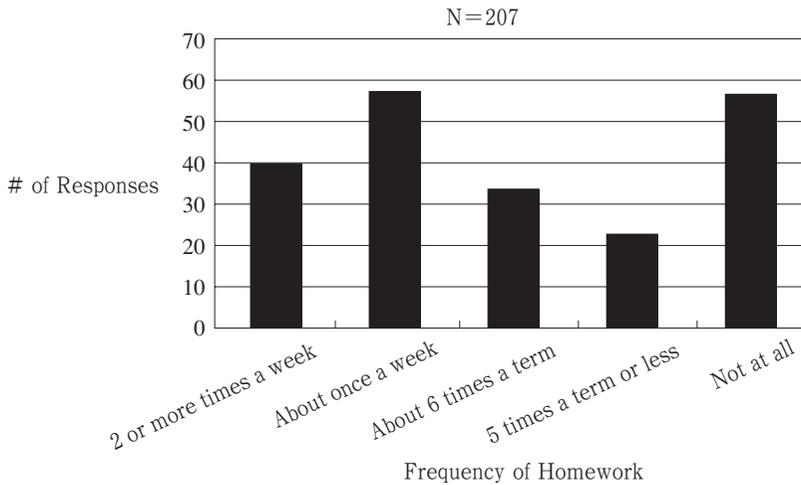
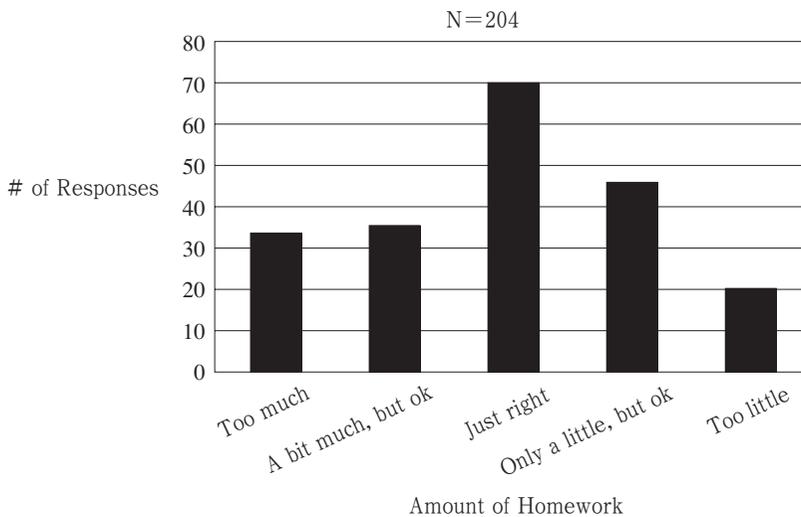


Figure 4.



somewhat effective in helping them to learn English.

Percentages of student feelings about graded readers (N=248):

I think they are very effective (非常に効果的と思う):	9%
I think they are somewhat effective (効果的と思う):	69%
I don't think they are very effective (あまり効果的ではない):	20%
I think they are very ineffective: (全然効果的ではない)	2%

**Question 13** asked “What do you want to learn from English classes at Momoyama? Be as specific as possible. (桃山での英語の授業を受けることによって、どのような力がつくことを望みますか。(できるだけ詳しく説明してください。例))” More than 50 students reported

International Conversation	Daily English Skills
General English Skills	Social English Skills
Listening	Reading
Pronunciation	Decrease fear when speaking
Higher level classes	More active participation
Conversation more than grammar	Opportunities to talk
Practical English	To be perfect in English
To speak fluently	How to converse with foreigners
Translation	English-only classes
TOEIC preparation	TOEFL preparation
Writing	Comprehension
To have fun	Speaking
Thinking in English	Express opinions
Future Job Qualifications	Understanding newspapers
Understanding TV	Talk with native teachers
Grammar	Understand other cultures

Table 8. "What do you want to learn from English class at Momoyama?"

wanting to learn English conversation. Reading and listening were also commonly listed. The complete list is as shown in table 8.

**Question 14** asked "Do you have any suggestions, requests or opinions concerning Bungakubu English classes? (文学部の英語科目について, 提案, 要望等, 意見があれば書いてください。)" The complete list is shown in table 8.

#### 4. Student Interviews

Fourteen students met with a researcher in two groups (eleven students in one group and 3 in the other), to discuss the questions from the questionnaire.

##### Oral Communication

Students felt that oral communication was the most important class for them to take; they perceived that writing and reading were secondary, and likewise about skills: Speaking and conversation was the most important skill they hoped to learn, and they perceived oral communication classes as a means to "get used to" listening to English and a chance to "use English [previously] learned," as well as to learn new words. A number of students believed that oral communication classes were their opportunities to practice language learned in reading and writing classes. Students reported greater satisfaction in classes where they were actually given opportunities for "chatting", and "practicing" spoken English in the classroom.

Activities performed in the oral communication classes as reported by these students included: Watching English-language television programs; drama games; active games such as "Fruit

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
Too much English Spoken	Want to speak fluently
Too low level	More English skills
Too high level	More TOEIC work
Good level	More opportunities to speak
School should separate students by skills	More daily English
Don't like quizzes	More communication with teacher
Didn't understand class	More pronunciation practice
Teacher was easy to understand	More time for discussion
Equal evaluation by teachers needed	More conversation with foreigners
Good teacher	More study abroad options
Bad teacher	More conversation practice
No English-speaking students were present	More writing practice
Liked English-only rule in class	Shared text would be good
Class was not interesting	Less homework
Fun class	Smaller classes
	More reading

Table 9. Student Suggestions

Basket”; listening to music; oral presentations, both small group and individual; completing a variety of activities from textbooks; pair and small group conversation; singing songs; parties; pair-work involving dialogues, vocabulary, and translation; vocabulary quizzes; writing journals including reflective writing; emailing pen-pals; using a TOEFL book; practicing phone conversations in English; and listening comprehension exercises; and self-evaluation.

Suggestions from students on how to improve these classes included: Smaller class sizes (unanimous agreement) of ten students or less; English only-the teacher should not speak Japanese; more opportunities for practicing spoken English with other students; more opportunities for conversation with native speakers; more enthusiastic, friendlier teachers; “lighter” atmosphere; younger teachers-about half the students felt that some of their teachers had difficulty “connecting” with the students due to their age; and more information about slang, youth culture and conversation, informal conversation techniques, both verbal and non-verbal.

Overall, students felt that the design of the classroom was very important to aiding rapport-building with other students, which in turn affected the students' level of comfort. Students also reported enjoying teachers who walked around the room while teaching, sat with them at their tables or desks, and who used humor. They hoped to have many opportunities to practice speaking in future classes but were concerned that they would be spending too much time listening to the teacher speak or reading from textbooks.

When asked if they enjoyed their 1<sup>st</sup> year oral communication class, 4 students answered “no” and 10 students answered “yes”.

## Reading

Students overall had less to say about the reading classes, but reported that they mostly enjoyed their graded readers, wanted opportunities to practice reading English from modern magazines and newspapers, and they all understood that they sometimes would have to read information that may not be of interest but that it was good experience. In addition there were some negative comments about reading classes.

Students said they studied reading, “to learn vocabulary and grammar.”; “to practice English words and to know the meanings.”; “because it helps us learn how to make sentences.”; “we can understand what we read more quickly.”; “to help us know how to speak and what words to use.” Three of the students discussed wanting the ability to practice what they learned in their reading classes during their oral communication classes. When asked if teachers from reading and oral communication classes should work together to help this process, only one student responded, and then it was to say, “No, it is the student’s responsibility to do it myself.” Two students reported feeling bored and disappointed in class because the only activities completed were the use of graded readers for silent reading in the classroom, rapid reading practice and vocabulary practice from a textbook. One group noted that the teacher’s personality influences the students’ ability to feel comfortable in the classroom and therefore what and how the student learns can be greatly affected by the teacher.

Activities performed in the reading classes as reported by these students included: Reading from textbooks; practicing vocabulary; using TOEFL books; using graded Readers; reading the beginning of a story and imagining the end of the story and talking about it with other students; pair presentations using the textbook; listening tests; rapid reading practice; vocabulary tests; listening to songs, pronunciation practice; timed reading tests; and individual oral reports.

Recommendations for improving reading classes focused on the teacher: Students hoped teachers would speak slowly; take time to get to know the students; offer students a chance to give feedback about the class activities; focus less on rapid reading and more on reading for enjoyment; and provide a variety of activities for learning. Students also agreed that some teachers seemed to be easier than others or gave higher grades, as reported by fellow students. They perceived grading practices in light of this as unfair and suggested that teachers all grade “the same way”.

When asked if they enjoyed their 1st year reading class, 8 students answered “no” and 6 students answered “yes”.

## 5. Summary of main points

At this stage only an initial analysis has been done. However some broad conclusions seem to

be as follows:

1. While there is some variation in objectives, both reading and oral communication teachers have as their main goals skills building and vocabulary extension, and both groups teach a certain amount of meta-linguistic knowledge, and learning skills. Students appeared to agree with this approach in that overwhelmingly they said they wanted improve their practical communication ability.
2. Both groups, but especially the reading group, felt that some link between the two classes would be advantageous. This could be in the form of sharing course outlines, using complementary themes and topics, or sharing information about student performance.
3. Both groups use textbooks, but also use a wide range of other materials and activities both based on those texts and in addition to them. Students reported that both teachers and students used more English in oral communication classes than in reading classes. Several teachers noted that textbook selection was difficult because they did not get sufficient information on their students before the beginning of classes.
4. Oral communication teachers seemed to give more written homework than reading teachers, but reading teachers were more likely to require students to prepare for class by pre-reading. Students reported a wide range of amounts of homework, from occasionally to after every class, but mostly they felt that the amount was more or less acceptable.
5. For assessment both groups used a holistic approach, incorporating attendance and participation, class and homework, and objective measures such as quizzes, and tests (including speaking tests). Most students understood their assessment systems.
6. All teachers evaluated their own courses by a combination of student feedback from various sources and observation of student progress.

### Conclusions

The data collected from both teachers and students would seem to indicate that the process of collecting that data has been worthwhile. Although there is little that's mandated by the faculty, and teachers are relatively free to do as they please, this does not mean that there is no organization. There is clearly a lot of thought being put into the planning and implementation of individual courses by teachers, and by and large student perceptions of those courses agree with what the teachers see themselves as trying to do. There are some suggestions that have been put forward by teachers, and others by students that may bear considering. Mostly, though, it would appear that there is a good case not for implementing any new kind of curriculum, but on the contrary for building on the strengths of the current one by sharing between teachers information about what they are doing, and why they are doing it. In this way, a responsive and flexible

administration could support teachers and students in developing the curriculum they have in a sustainable way.

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## Curriculum Change: Working with Teachers' Professional Knowledge Rather than Against it

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The word 'curriculum' does not simply mean a set of instructions, but it refers to all the things that go on in and out of classrooms concerning student learning. Therefore when we think about curriculum change we need to consider far more than prescribing textbooks, methods and course outlines: we need to know in detail what the teachers and students are already doing, what they want to do, and what they think about potential changes; and we need to involve them in any changes. This paper describes an investigation into the current 'curriculum-in-action' at this university. The authors conclude that although there is little in the way of formal curriculum requirements, in fact teachers are teaching broadly similar skills, though with a considerable variety of methods and learning activities. Both teachers and students expressed general satisfaction with current courses, though they also had some suggestions for improvements. The authors recommend that future curriculum change should build on the strengths of the current status quo by encouraging and supporting exchange of ideas and materials between teachers.