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The English curriculum at Muroran Institute of Technology has gone through many changes over the last few years. Many improvements have been seen but there are still parts of it that need refinement. This paper looks at a number of areas that will be researched in the hope that the curriculum can continue to develop and progress. In particular we look at four areas: reasoning behind the materials we use; how we assess materials; creation of an e-learning system; and the Common European Framework of Reference.

Keywords : Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), task-based learning, material creation, material assessment, e-learning, CEFR

1 Communicative Language Teaching
Brian Gaynor

1.1   Introduction

A (non-English teaching) colleague at this university once dismissed the 'English Communication' classes I teach as merely "fun", adding that "anyone can teach them". Unfortunately, I suspect he is not alone in sharing this dismissive opinion. There seems to be a prevailing belief that the 'English Communication' course in Muroran Institute of Technology is akin to a general, all-purpose *eikaiwa*. Further undermining our cause is the related belief that the relaxed and convivial atmosphere we strive to create in order to lessen our students' inhibitions about using (and misusing) English in the classroom, is in fact mere 'fun' and, conversely, that 'real' learning is a serious, earnest affair that permits no amusement.

This short article is therefore an attempt to dispel these unfounded beliefs and explain the nature of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its firm basis in second language acquisition (SLA) research.

1.2   Communicative Language Teaching – Towards a Definition

Communicative Language Teaching is generally regarded as an approach to language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) rather than an explicit methodology. It is based on the theory that the primary

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function of language use is communication. The organizing principle behind the approach is the need for learners to develop communicative competence (Hymes, 1971), or simply put, communicative ability. In other words, its goal is to make use of real-life situations that necessitate communication.

''Communicative competence'' was a term introduced into discussions of language use and second or foreign language learning in the early 1970s (Hymes, 1971; Jakobovits, 1970; Savignon, 1971). Competence here can be understood in terms of the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning, and draws upon both psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives in SLA research (Savignon, 1972, 1997). It can be perhaps best defined, following from (Canale and Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Hymes, 1972) as "the ability to interpret and enact appropriate social behaviors that require the active involvement of the learner in the production of the target language" (Brandl, 2007, p. 5). Such a definition encompasses a wide range of required learner abilities: the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (linguistic competence); the ability to say the appropriate thing in a certain social situation (sociolinguistic competence); the ability to start, enter, contribute to, and end a conversation, and the ability to do this in a consistent and coherent manner (discourse competence); and the ability to communicate effectively and repair problems caused by communication breakdowns (strategic competence).

1.3   CLT and Methodology

As far as theories of learning and effective strategies in teaching are concerned, CLT does not adhere to one particular theory or method (Brandl, 2007). Rather, the approach assimilates theories about learning and teaching from a wide range of areas such as cognitive science, educational psychology, and SLA. In this way, CLT embraces and reconciles many different approaches and points of view about language learning and teaching, which allows it to meet a wide range of proficiency-oriented goals and also accommodate different learner needs and preferences. Although this methodological flexibility does preclude the development of a universally accepted model for CLT, there is nevertheless widespread agreement as to the core tenets underlying CLT, helpfully summarized by Berns (1990, p. 104) as:

1. Language teaching is based on a view of language as communication. That is, language is seen as a social tool that speakers use to make meaning; speakers communicate about something to someone for some purpose, either orally or in writing.
2. Diversity is recognized and accepted as part of language development and use in second language learners and users, as it is with first language users.
3. A learner's competence is considered in relative, not in absolute, terms.
4. More than one variety of a language is recognized as a viable model for learning and teaching.
5. Culture is recognized as instrumental in shaping speakers' communicative competence, in both their first and subsequent languages.
6. No single methodology or fixed set of techniques is prescribed.
7. Language use is recognized as serving ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions and is related to the development of learners' competence in each.
8. It is essential that learners be engaged in doing things with language—that is, that they use language for a variety of purposes in all phases of learning.

Perhaps a further useful addition to this list, as suggested by Wesche & Skehan (2002, p. 208), is the "use of authentic (non-pedagogic) texts and communication activities linked to "real-world" contexts, often emphasizing links across written and spoken modes and channels".

1.4   CLT and Task-Based Instruction

For decades traditional methods of language teaching have used grammar topics or texts (e.g., dialogues, short stories) as a basis for organizing a syllabus. With CLT methodologies this approach has changed; the development of communicative skills is placed at the forefront, while grammar is now regarded as subordinate, introduced only as a means of supporting the development of these skills. This emphasis on communication skills – of learning to use language rather than merely learning about language - is based on contemporary theories of language learning and acquisition, which claim that language use is the driving force for language development (Long, 1989; Prabhu, 1987). Advocates of such theories (see Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun, 1993) suggest that, as Norris et al. (1998) put it, "the best way to learn and teach a language is through social interactions...[they] allow students to work toward a clear goal, share information and opinions, negotiate meaning, get the interlocutor's help in comprehending input, and receive feedback on their language production. In the process, learners not only use their inter-language, but also modify it, which in turn promotes acquisition" (p. 31).

In other words, it is not the text one reads or the grammar one studies but the tasks that are presented that provide learners a purpose to use the grammar in a meaningful context. This gives task design and its use a pivotal role in shaping the language learning process. A task-based approach to learning implies the notion of learning by doing. Such a concept is not just an instrumental part of CLT methodology, but has been recognized and promoted as a fundamental principle underlying learning across all fields of education. The task-based approach is based on the theory that a hands-on approach positively enhances a learner's cognitive engagement. In addition, as Doughty and Long (2003) remind us, "new knowledge is better integrated into long-term memory, and easier retrieved, if tied to real-world events and activities" (p. 58).

In research on SLA, the "learning by doing" principle is strongly supported by an active approach to using language early on. According to Omaggio-Hadley (2001), learners should be encouraged to express their own meaning as early as possible after productive skills have been introduced. Such opportunities should also entail a wide range of contexts in which they can carry out numerous different speech acts. This, furthermore, needs to happen under real conditions of communication so the learner's linguistic knowledge becomes automatic (Ellis, 1997).

1.5   Authentic Materials in the Curriculum

One of the more important instructional practices promoted by communicative language teaching (CLT) is the extensive integration of authentic materials in the curriculum. 'Authentic materials' refers to the use in teaching of texts, photographs, audio-visual media, and other teaching resources that were not specially prepared for pedagogical purposes (Richards, 2001). There are numerous justifications for the use of authentic materials. They contain authentic language and reflect real-world language use (Richards, 2001). In other words, they expose students to real language in the kinds of contexts where it naturally occurs. Furthermore, they relate more closely to learners' needs and hence provide a link between the classroom and students' needs in the real world. The use of authentic materials also supports a more creative approach to teaching; that is, its use allows teachers to develop their full potential, designing activities and tasks that better match their teaching styles and the

learning styles of their students. Last, the use of authentic materials requires the teachers to train their students in using learning strategies early on. These are essential skills that support the learning process at all levels of instruction (Brandl, 2007, p. 13).

1.6   CLT, Context and Japan

It should be noted that CLT is not a 'miracle methodology' for teaching English as a foreign language. In particular, the implicit focus on teaching methodology in CLT comes perhaps at the cost of context, of where we teach and where learners learn. As Arnold (1999) has noted contextual factors such as students' attitudes, cultural expectations, pedagogical styles, etc., "are clearly at least as important as teaching method" (Bax, 2003, p. 282). This is a valid criticism and has generated a correspondingly large degree of debate, particularly here in Japan (Nishino and Watanabe, 2008), about what Tanaka terms the "cultural appropriateness" of CLT to "Japanese educational practices and their associated learning patterns" (2009, p. 108).

Sakai, in a two-year longitudinal study investigating a group of Japanese junior and senior high school English teachers, found that "In overall actual classroom teaching, grammar instruction was central, and far more foregrounded than CLT" (2004, p. 157). Takanashi has also posited a number of cultural context based factors that impede the development of communication proficiency amongst Japanese students. She cites large class sizes at all levels of education, teaching methods constrained both by teachers preferred pedagogical approaches and the necessity of exam preparation, limited teaching time, and, somewhat subjectively, the influence of Japanese intercultural communication styles on learners adoption of a CLT methodology.

The aim, therefore, must be to strike the appropriate balance between CLT on the one hand, and what our students consider appropriate pedagogy. As Tanaka notes "CLT postulates that teaching is learner-centered, and teachers should be responsive to learners' needs and interests; it is also crucial for teachers to understand the concept and principle of CLT and to adapt their teaching in culturally appropriate ways" (2009, p. 118).

1.7   Conclusion

CLT does not promote one standardized method or curriculum, but is eclectic in its approach. 'Eclectic' here is not a synonym for 'easy' or even, as my colleague would have it, 'fun *eikaiwa*'. Rather, as Brandl puts it "being eclectic means it promotes the best or most effective techniques or methodologies" (2007, p. 22) to which one can add, following from Tanaka (2009), 'are the most culturally appropriate to the learner's situation'. Relatedly, it needs to be understood that the teacher's choice of techniques and

learning tasks is not an arbitrary decision, but is firmly grounded in theories of learning, motivation research (see Johnson, this article), second language acquisition research, and educational psychology.

Perhaps CLT's greatest strength is the fact that it is not an inviolable process like those found in the fields of science and engineering, but rather is a flexible and constantly evolving approach, open and receptive to innovations and changes in methodology such as the rapid rise of e-learning in EFL (see Hagley, this article), or the use of ideas from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as a means of developing learner autonomy (see Graves, this article). As the teachers tasked with the implementation of CLT, we are constantly seeking ways to accommodate these changes in ways that best afford our students the opportunity to become better learners and users of English.

2 Assessing the Motivational Effect of Instructional Materials
Michael JOHNSON

Regardless of educational context, the selection of instructional materials is an ongoing concern for a great number of teachers. Most teachers have experienced the rewards and satisfaction of working with a particularly effective textbook or set of instructional materials, or, alternatively, suffered through the agony of struggling to overcome, supplement or rewrite materials that don't quite fit the educational objectives of a particular class. Of course, instructional materials play an important role in the communicative classroom. As the primary focus of the communicative approach is to "…promote the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events" (Savignon, 1991), the role of instructional materials in facilitating this participation is of particular importance. Unfortunately, students both carry with them, and later develop, particular affective states which, while not present in other academic or social situations, arise in foreign language learning contexts and inhibit the degree to which they embrace communicative activities in the classroom (for more on state motivation and anxiety see Brophy, 1983; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1991; 1986). One goal of the research project described in this paper is to discern the effect of instructional materials on one particular affective variable, language learning motivation. While assumptions are often made regarding which types of materials motivate students, little empirical research has been conducted in this area. To address the dearth of research in this area, a study will be proposed which will attempt to systematically measure the effects of materials on language learning motivation by drawing upon approaches and instruments from language education and instructional design theory. It is hoped that this inquiry will result in improved materials

evaluation in the communicative English classes at Muroran Institute of Technology.

2.1 Instructional materials and motivation

With the recent shift of language learning motivation research toward the learner, the classroom context has taken on new importance. This has resulted in instructional materials emerging as an important prospective area of inquiry. In an examination of individual differences in language learning, Skehan (1990) observed that while the socio-psychological approach pioneered by Gardner (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972) was invaluable in establishing motivational theory and research methodologies, it was ultimately of limited applicability to classroom research. He suggested that longitudinal, "as well as more open-ended and ethnographic techniques may need to be used to address such issues as materials and satisfaction with materials, or the basis for expectations about student success" (p.286). Crookes and Schmidt (1991) likewise called for a more complete analysis of motivation that would examine the phenomenon at micro, classroom, syllabus, and informal (out-of-class/long-term) levels. Included at the classroom level is the need to examine areas such as preliminaries, activities, feedback, effects of students' perceptions, and materials. Dornyei (1994) developed a comprehensive language learning motivational model that integrates micro and macro characteristics of motivation into a three-tired framework. The three tiers consist of a language level (consisting of integrative and instrumental subsystems), a learner level (consisting of learner needs and self-confidence), and a learning situation level (consisting of course-, teacher-, group-specific motivational components) (p.279-280). The course-specific motivational components concern the syllabus, teaching materials, teaching methods, and the learning task, and like Crookes and Schmidt (1991), Dornyei sees these classroom components as being centered on four conditions: interest, relevance, expectancy and satisfaction.

While instructional materials play an important role in the above frameworks and models, there has been little second language motivational research which explicitly examines their effect on motivational intensity and learning behavior. In a number of broader studies instructional materials have been identified as one of many motivating, or demotivating, factors in the classroom (Chambers, 1998; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Gorham & Millette, 1997; Sakui & Gaeis, 1999). However, only Peacock's (1997) study focuses exclusively on the motivational impact of materials in the classroom. In the study, Peacock examines the impact of authentic versus artificial materials on student motivation. Interestingly, he found that while students reported authentic materials to be less interesting than artificial materials, they were nonetheless more motivated by them due to their authenticity. Peacock's research design, combining short interviews, class observations, and questionnaires, represents an eclectic mixed-method approach that effectively sheds light on the motivational impact of instructional materials from a variety of perspectives.

In other areas of education, the motivational impact of instructional materials has received more prolonged and specific attention. Keller's work in instructional design has resulted in a systemic approach for evaluating and designing instructional materials (Keller, 1979, 1983, 1987b, 1987c). Keller's early work (1979, 1983) established a "Model of Motivation, Performance and Instructional Influence" (1983, p. 27) based upon an expectancy-value framework. Accompanying this was the "Model for Designing Motivational Instruction" (1983), a four stage model that moved recursively through analysis, design, implementation and evaluation stages. At the core of the design stage were four categories of instructional design, interest, relevance, expectancy and satisfaction. These were later adapted as elements in Crookes and Schmidt's (1991) research framework, and the course-specific components of Dornyei's (1994) motivational model. Drawing on the foundation of his earlier research, Keller developed the ARCS Model of motivation (Keller, 1987a), which described students' motivation to learn in terms of four characteristics: attention (for arousing and sustaining curiosity and interest), relevance (strategies that link learners' needs, interests and motives), confidence (strategies that help students develop a positive expectation for successful achievement), and satisfaction (strategies that provide extrinsic and intrinsic reinforcement for effort) (Keller, 1987c; Small, 1997). Using this model as a base, Keller developed the Instructional Materials Motivational Survey (IMMS) (Keller, 1987a), a thirty-six item Likert scale survey measuring the attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction components of instructional materials. Providing a systemic means for evaluating the variety of cognitive areas now targeted in language learning motivation research, it represents an ideal means for assessing instructional materials in the language learning classroom.

2.2 Japanese engineering students and language learning motivation

A wide variety of studies have been conducted into language learning motivation in Japanese university students. The results of these studies have varied depending largely on major and year of study of the students examined. Japanese university students have been found to posses a range of motivational orientations (instrumental, integrative/international, intrinsic, and extrinsic), as well as demonstrating demotivation, foreign language classroom anxiety, low self-esteem and negative self-appraisal (Burden, 2002; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Matsuda, 2004; O'Donnell, 2003; Warrington & Jeffery, 2005; Yamashiro, 2001).

Studies concerning Japanese engineering students have found them to be more extrinsically and instrumentally oriented than students in other majors, and to have negative impressions of the role of English instructors in the learning process (Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura, 2001). Engineering students have also demonstrated high levels of demotivation, with more highly proficient students attributing this demotivation to external factors, and students with lower proficiency demonstrating internal attributions. (Falout & Maruyama, 2004). A recent exploratory study (Johnson, 2010) found that Japanese engineering students' English learning motivation fluctuated over the duration of their academic careers, with a distinct u-shaped curve spanning the third year of high school with the third year of university. Positive and negative fluctuations were attributed to the classroom environment (both teachers and materials), while low levels of self-efficacy and a general dislike for English were found to negatively affect motivation. Students indicated that their motivation increased when they experienced success in the classroom, and that both academic credits and the possibility of using English in future careers, had a positive influence on motivation.

2.3   A prospective examination of instructional materials

In order to assess the effect of instructional materials on learner motivation, a classroom-based study has been designed for administration later this year. This study will employ both qualitative and quantitative research methods in an experimental study examining the effect of different genres of instructional materials on motivational intensity. The methods will be employed using a within-subject/repeated measures experimental design where a single group of participants will be studied, and the independent variable (in this case instructional materials) will be manipulated to ascertain its effect on the dependent variable (motivation). The study will be carried out over a single semester in an English communication class, and will involve the rotated use of general English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instructional materials. Between weeks 1 and 14 of a fifteen-week semester students will be taught with general EFL materials on weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12, and then with ESP materials on alternating weeks 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13. Students' reactions to the materials used over the duration of the semester will be measured weekly with brief post-class questionnaires containing semantic differential scale items (adapted from Gardner 1985), and then at the conclusion of the semester by means of an adapted version of Keller's IMMS (Keller, 1987a), and semi-structured interviews. It is hoped that the use of a mixed method approach will result in data with sufficient breadth and depth to provide insight into the relationship between materials and motivation in language learners, and that this information will be used by teachers at Muroran Institute of Technology to evaluate instructional materials used in communicative English classes. Ultimately, it is hoped that will result in improved teaching and learning outcomes at this institution.

3 Introducing e-learning to the Communicative Language Curriculum
Eric Hagley

It is often not obvious how e-learning can be related to communicative language learning. Someone sitting at a computer is not generally seen as someone communicating. However e-learning has much to offer the student in a communicative language curriculum. This section will outline some of the means in which incorporating e-learning into a communicative curriculum can benefit students.

3.1   Tools that are available

Perhaps the most obvious use of e–learning in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context is in improving the passive skills of reading and listening. With the advent of the World Wide Web (WWW) anyone with an Internet connection now can have access to an enormous amount of information in a variety of forms. Text documents and web sites are still the most common but recently audio and even video content is often used in educational settings. Teachers can find content that is suitable for their students on the WWW or create it and upload it to the WWW. Students can then access it from wherever and whenever they like. Language learning and acquisition requires input and in this way students have dramatically increased access to a large variety of input. In addition to the WWW there are numerous software packages that offer students more intensive practice in the form of drills too.

In the last two years with the development of web 2.0 systems such as blogs and other user generated content, the productive skills of writing and speaking can also be activated via e-learning. Students can rightly feel they have a real audience to which to write when they know the material they are writing will go on a blog that is open to the world. This is the same for audio and video blogs and sharing sites as well as social networking ones. Of course a teacher can create pages that only allow certain people to view content as well if privacy concerns are raised.

The previous two paragraphs have focused on asynchronous uses of computers and the WWW. Synchronous use of e-learning tools increases the communicative aspect of said learning. It becomes real time communication. There are now many studies that note Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is a beneficial means of interaction (Warschauer, 1997; Swaffar, 1998). Tools such as chats or messenger software are examples of synchronous text communication. Audio and visual applications have

also become popular. Programs such as Skype, Google phone and many other voice over internet protocol (VoIP) systems allow free audio and video communication. DimDim is an example of how you can have a full conference or class online combining audio, video, text and other multi media components - all of this in real time. Synchronous options do require more powerful computers and faster Internet connections to work well though, something that many developing countries still don't have. The most recent option is something called "Second Life" where you take on a persona in the form of an avatar and move around virtual worlds meeting other avatars. In so doing you have to cover the whole gamut of communicative competencies albeit in an unreal world.

3.2 Management of the Tools

From the previous summary we can see that there are many tools that are available to the EFL teacher. However the teacher requires a means in which to organize and manage the tools that are available and put them into a format such that students can easily see what to use, how to use it and why it is useful. There is a number of Learning Management Systems (LMS), sometimes also called Course Management Systems (CMS), available. The most famous proprietary one of these is Blackboard. There are other open source ones available with one of the more common ones being Moodle. Moodle is the LMS that Muroran Institute of Technology (MuroIT) has adopted and it is this system that will be discussed.

Moodle, as outlined on its web page is "a software package for producing Internet-based courses and web sites. It is a global development project designed to support a social constructionist framework of education... the word Moodle was originally an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment." There are different modules that make up Moodle hence the term "modular". There are many standard ones such as the forum, wiki, text resource, chat and quiz module. The term "object-oriented" could be said to mean that the object of our teaching is of course our students and their learning. We teach them, and Moodle helps us to do so. Moodle is "dynamic" in that the course is always evolving, always changing with teacher input, but more importantly student input and interaction. It is through this that the "learning environment" is created. Many of the tools outlined in section one are part of the Moodle package. Most of the others can be incorporated into a course or links to them shown. There are also third party modules and add-ons that ensure Moodle can be tailored to the needs of the teachers and students using it.

Via the forum module asynchronous interaction can easily take place in both the spoken and written form. By using many of the other resources available, the listening and writing skills can be taught, practiced and tested. At present, testing of the communicative aspect of the Moodle platform is being carried out in a number of ways at MuroIT. Online communication is taking place as follows: Japanese to Japanese interaction, Japanese to other EFL students in various countries, as well as Japanese to native speakers of English who are studying Japanese. Initial reaction from students varies from great interest in the projects to unhappiness at the increase in workload, though this is not particularly great. Feedback from online questionnaires is generally positive regarding this interaction. In addition there is positive sentiment shown toward the fact students have access to a greater range of listening and reading materials than a simple textbook can provide. Another positive area is that students receive immediate feedback from the assessment tools that are employed in Moodle such as the quiz and lesson modules. In short, the Moodle platform allows students to easily communicate with each other, with students in other countries and with the teacher outside the classroom. It also gives students access to, and the ability to interact with, various multimedia thus increasing their exposure to a variety of types of language input as well as offering them an audience for output.

3.3 Planning an e-learning System for Engineering Students at Muroran Institute of Technology.

It is important to stress from the outset of any e-learning plan that you cannot replace a teacher with a computer. E-learning is a tool that can be used by teachers to: assist in the delivery of content to students; allow students to review material that has been covered in classrooms; be a medium for interaction between students and/or teachers; be a content source. No matter how well organized, it can never take over completely the role of guide and mentor that the teacher maintains. However, there is a growing body of research (Warschauer and Healey 1998; Wiburg and Butker Pasceo, 2002; Bax and Chambers, 2006) that suggests effective use of e-learning enhances students' ability to acquire and use a foreign language (FL). This is the reason e-learning is becoming popular.

As with any curriculum change, development of any e-learning program should begin with an understanding of the students' needs and be carried out whilst teachers are being trained. To this end, MuroIT has created a number of online tutorials for teachers to familiarize themselves with the LMS to be used, namely Moodle. They need to create Japanese versions of these also. As outlined earlier in this paper, students' needs are also being surveyed in ways such as questionnaires to future employers and pilot courses with present students.

In addition to and from this development, materials need to be designed and created. To a certain extent this has been taking place and the pace and breadth of this should increase as teachers become more familiar with the LMS and the material that is already available. Communication partners for any CMC projects that will be carried out have to be organized. The pilot

projects that are taking place presently are the basis of relationship foundations between teachers that will take part in the future. These will need to be strengthened as at present the number of teachers involved in participating countries / sister schools is not enough to ensure all our students have access to this powerful tool for communication. Finally, a quality control system needs to be put in place to ensure the materials and methods used are appropriate. Moodle's item analysis feature in the quiz module is one tool that can be used, but ongoing analysis of the materials used and student feedback is an essential part of any e-learning program.

3.4   Conclusion to this section.

There are many applications for computers and technology in and outside the EFL classroom. With quality online materials and access to CMC, e-learning can be a very useful tool to assist students in their quest to acquire communication skills in English. Through the development of an e-learning system at MuroIT we hope to ensure our students have a top quality e-learning system that will complement the work teachers do throughout the curriculum.

4 Identifying Students' Levels of English Competency: Towards a Unified System of Objectives, Directives and Assessment

Ewa Grave

4.1   Introduction

Introducing the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and Language Portfolio (LP) to Japanese university English classes would promote motivation, self-awareness and reflective learning in learners.   It would also help provide a model to educators for developing a coherent English curriculum.

4.2   CEFR and LP

In November 2001, the European Union Council Resolution proposed implementation of CEFR(the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment) to provide a method of assessing and teaching. CEFR applies to all languages in Europe and, as UNIcert, to languages of other countries. CEFR divides language proficiency into three broad divisions, each with two sub-divisions:
Basic User - A1 and A2
Independent User -B1 and B2
Proficient User: C1 and C2
This simple scale is readily understood by non-specialists and provides teachers and curriculum developers with helpful reference points. A self-assessment grid presents a more detailed summary of particular skills. Learners can use the grid to profile their acquired language skills. Each level comes with a checklist of detailed descriptors in order to further self-

assess one's level of proficiency. For example, the grid for a B1 (an independent) learner looks like this:

		B1
UNDERSTANDING	Listening	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programs on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
	Reading	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.
SPEAKING	Spoken Interaction	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
	Spoken Production	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.
WRITING	Writing	I can write simple connected text on topics, which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.

Council of Europe Portal. Intranet 2000 (http://www.coe.int/)

The LP, or Language Portfolio, was developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe in 1998-2000 and launched in Europe during the European Year of Languages in 2001. Its main purpose is to support plurilingualism and pluricultularism. It is a document "aimed to help language learners to keep track of their language learning and record their language learning achievements and experiences" (Teacher Manual, Language Portfolio for Japanese University, 2009). So far 103 models of ELP (English Language Portfolio) have been accredited by one agency—the European Language Portfolio Validation Committee. The ELP models come from various European languages, and its age groups range from children, students in lower secondary education (11 to 15 years old), to adult learners. The portfolio consists of three parts—Language Passport, Language Biography, and Dossier (http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/main_pages/levels.html).

The ELP is a more recent CEFR development, and it refines the concept of intercultural competence. Zarate (2003) points out that language teaching needs to overcome the duality of comparing and contrasting one's own and foreign/target language and culture. Instead, a common ground needs to be developed with the language learner as "a social actor interacting with other citizens in multilingual situations on equal terms." She adds that the first step to accomplishing such mediation is the elimination of old conflicts: traditional polarities, historical biases, cultural stereotypes, etc. Although Zarate's observations and conclusions pertain to European states, her argument about the duality of language teaching applies to other countries as well. Looking at just one aspect of the duality of foreign language teaching: language versus culture, we could see how we, educators, must work together on clarifying the objectives. "If language is seen as a social practice, culture becomes the very core of teaching. Cultural awareness must then be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of (…) the language proficiency." (Kramsh, 1993)

One part of the Language Passport is a self-assessment grid—a Can-do checklist based on the scales offered by CEFR. The learner can assess his or her listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing skills. Besides acknowledging one's own current level of proficiency, learners can set learning goals and monitor their progress. A completion of all the tasks in the checklists is not necessary to achieve a particular level. For instance, an ability to perform about 80% of the tasks for level A-2 spoken interaction means that the learner has achieved that level in terms of the self-assessment grid in LP. A grid for level A-2 speech interaction includes such tasks as: "I can handle short social interactions if people help me," "I can participate in short conversation in routine contexts on topics of interest," "I can say what I like, dislike, agree or disagree with people, and make comparisons," "I can handle a telephone call (e.g. say who is calling, ask

to speak to someone, give my number, take a simple message)," etc. More tasks can be specified and added by the learner. The self-assessment gives learner a sense of accomplishment, a look back at progress made and a perspective of goals yet to achieve. A student can feel more in control of his or her learning, take more responsibility for own goals and accomplishments, and gain motivation to learn more.

4.3   CEFR in AGH

Technical universities in Europe have been adjusting TOEFL and TOEIC scores to the CEFR levels and defining minimally acceptable language levels for graduating students. For example, a graduating engineer in France needs to have at least a B-2 level of English knowledge, which corresponds to a TOEIC score of 750 (News TOEFL, 2006).

Poland, France, and 46 other countries belong to the Bologna Process, a group that seeks to make academic degrees across Europe more compatible. The AGH, University of Science and Technology in Poland, with a total of 33,419 students (2008), adopted the Polish Ministry of Education recommendations for CEFR in 2008. In March 2010, I interviewed Janusz Szczygieł, an associate director of the AGH's Language Institute. AGH students took at least one foreign language in high school. Most of them know it on the B-1 level, about 20 - 30% on B-2 level, and 10% on C-1 level. According to Szczygieł, compared to other English language skills, writing seems to demonstrate the most evident problems with grammar competency. According to the Ministry's guidelines, students of the first degree studies (studies leading to a Bachelors' degree) in their second or third year take an exam in a foreign language at CEFR level B-2. The titles of the courses include the CEFR level they aim to achieve—for example, "English B1". Each course is worth one point, or credit.   In order to graduate, students need to complete four courses (last, fourth point, obtained after passing the B2 exam). Similarly, at the Muroran Institute of Technology students need eight credits in English, or completion of four English courses.

The foreign language coursework, including English, starts in the second year of study at AGH. As a culmination of coursework, after the third year of study, all students take General English exam at level B2. Successful completion of the exam awards each student with one credit. It is noteworthy that during the two years leading up to the exam, teachers focus on meeting CEFR objectives for B2 level, namely General English with elements of Office English, Business English and Academic English, and there is no time to introduce technical English. Technical English courses are offered, but as of now only on elective basis, and only to students of graduate school. The AGH's Language Institute educators plan to add Technical English courses to compulsory coursework for undergraduates who completed the B-2 exam.   Such a plan assumes that students should have a sound grip of

General English before proceeding onto more specialized English courses.

AGH students' motivation to learn languages is high. It is a general understanding that knowledge of foreign languages are needed both in the future professional life, as well as outside a job, but it does not always apply to individual student's effort. Thus, the problem, says Szczygieł, boils down to transference of very positive attitudes students express verbally towards learning into actual student performance.

A discrepancy in the levels of foreign language acquired in high schools coupled with the AGH university decision, made for economic reasons, to start the coursework from the second year also becomes a concern of the language teachers at the AGH Language Institute.

4.4   CEFR in Japan

While CEFR was taking shape in Europe, things were happening in Japan. In 2000, the Japanese Ministry of Education summoned the Committee to Promote Revision of English Education to speed reform. A year later, the Committee proposed changes spanning elementary, secondary and university education and covering areas such as curriculum recommendations to teacher training. High schools that were willing to go beyond the prescribed curriculum received subsidies for development of new English programs. Such innovative programs use computer technology in teaching, host exchange programs with foreign schools, and increase content classes in English, ultimately producing better speakers.

A significant result of the committee's report was the strategic plan to educate "Japanese who can use English". Out of the four directives, the first is of most concern here: "to research the relationship between the objectives noted in the Course of Study and the actual state of English education, and to research the possibility of using 'standardized tests' to measure the proficiencies specified in the Course of Study". The research group, which works on this particular task, examines what is taught in English classes; whether the objectives are realized, and how much English students are actually capable of producing using "Can-Do" criteria (Yoshida, 2003), reminiscent of CEFR "Can-do" lists.

Although many educators recognize that the education system needs to respond to internationalization, some Japanese bureaucrats resist abandoning national perspective. Conversely, the European slant of the CEFR needs to be adjusted to context of contemporary Japan, where Buddhist concepts of "no-self" and "fluid identities" still have their realization (Parmenter, 2003). With regard to high school education, Yoshida (2003) warns, that "with over 6,000 Assistant Language Teachers (...) representing not only native Englishes but also (other) western culture as being the ideal models for the Japanese to emulate", educational objectives should resolve what model of English should be taught. However, the debate on what type of English is most desirable should not come before what exactly students need to know to become effective English users.

In 2009 JALT Forum in Shizuoka was devoted to use of the CEFR and ELP in Japanese universities. What follows is a summary report on its main presentations.

In 2006, the Keio University Research Center for Foreign Language Education began a five-year research project sponsored jointly by Keio University and the MEXT (Ministry of Education, culture, sports, Science and Technology). 'Action Oriented Plurilingual Learning Project' (AOP), promotes autonomous learning of multiple foreign languages. It calls for development of a learning and assessment framework based on the CEFR and a Japanese version of the ELP to be implemented by language teachers in Keio University departments in order to provide "continuity and transparency of foreign language education at all levels of the Keio University education system". (Atobe et al. 2009)

In her report on the ongoing use of CEFR and portfolio use in university classes, Yoko Sato points out that most learners responded positively, especially to task-specific checklists that allowed them to see their progress throughout the semester while at the same time motivating them to learn. The self-monitoring allows students to control their learning process and makes it more meaningful.

Ibaraki University's Noriko Nagai discusses Can-do lists based on CEFR and how by sharing them English teachers have a common reference when discussing curriculum development. She sounds enthusiastic about the lists, calling them tools for class design and models "for achieving specific outcomes (...) in developing a coherent English curriculum."

The participants of the JALT forum hope that educators become aware of the practical uses of CEFR and ELP, since not all are fully aware of how to implement them in classes. In his influential paper, "Language learner autonomy and the European Language Portfolio: Two L2 English examples" (2009), David Little points out that the Council of Europe's ELP, with the CEFR and Can-do lists, is capable of supporting the implementation of language learner autonomy on a large scale. He supports the European Language Portfolio and explains how it can stimulate reflective learning in which goal setting and self-assessment play a central role. He concludes by giving two practical examples that involve the learning of L2 English in Ireland – one case involving adult immigrants with refugee status and the other with newcomer pupils in primary schools.

The significance of the Common European Framework for Languages is already well established. It is influential in developing teaching materials, assessment tools and curricula. Nonetheless, the context in which language teaching and learning takes place is constantly changing and the need to develop the

Framework with respect to the clarification of 'intercultural competence' is evident.

For the CEFR to work in Japan, it needs to be adjusted to the Japanese context with recognition of internationalization from a more East Asian perspective. The Asian concept of group consensus versus individualism might interfere with soundness of student's self-assessment - a student may hesitate to acknowledge his or her accomplishments, for instance. Nevertheless, having a uniformly recognized framework for learning and teaching languages and intercultural competence goes beyond language teaching; it has political and ethical implications. Thus, teaching of languages compromises a social activity (Byram, 2003) of major significance in the contemporary world.

4.5   CEFR at the Muroran Institute of Technology

Thanks to the efforts of Professor Krause-Ono, since 2008 in German classes and 2009 in Russian and Chinese classes, teachers have been using CEFR-based Can-do lists. The teachers of foreign languages other than English strive for uniform objectives that can be included in common syllabi and evaluated in a similar way. Self-assessment Can-do lists made their appearance in classes of English teachers such as Eric Hagley. Students were asked to report their progress in class online during the 2008 semester.

It is perhaps fair to place Muroran Koudai's first year students' English level at A1, specifically for speaking. With that in mind, we, the English teachers could set the objectives of the first year speaking course, now titled "English A", to fit the level A2 of the CEFR. Since each level comes with guidelines of what students should be able to do, objectives naturally become points of the assessment at the end of the course. It is, understandably, a matter of years to come and right now a tentative plan that English teachers and curriculum development groups need to discuss. CEFR is still a novelty and not everybody knows how it can be used in practice. However, having uniformity of objectives, or deciding in advance what exactly is to be accomplished by students by the end of each course, is a worth cause. We educators need CEFR for the comprehensive and compatible English education program at our university.

This spring semester, the students in my English Communication class were given Can-do lists to evaluate each other on free speech production. They spoke in English for two minutes on one of three topics: Free Time, Food, Family. Most third year university students have studied English for eight years. Unfortunately, the main weakness of Japanese English education prevented most of them from developing above the A1; while students' multiple choice test taking skills in grammar are developed well, they have difficulties with communicating their thoughts in speaking and writing. If CEFR becomes a widely used

reference in Japan, a more rounded English user is more likely to emerge from high school and from university.

In the most recent development, the English department agreed to hold a series of workshops on CEFR and other curriculum development tools in order to create a uniform system of objectives and assessment in the 2010 academic year.

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コミュニケーションが元で 団結的な英語カリキュラムへ

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室蘭工業大学における英語カリキュラムはこの数年間の間に多くの改善をし、発展している。しかしながらまだ改善の余地がある。この論文で様々な視点から最新の研究を紹介し考察している。これらの成果を基にして室蘭工業大学の英語カリキュラムのより方向性を指示する。

キーワード：英語コミュニケーション教授法、タスクベース教授法、教材評価法、e-ラーニング、CEFR