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## Syllabus Design: A Shift from Type A to Type B in an English Language Program at a Japanese University

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the need for improvement of the syllabus currently used by this author at a Japanese university specializing in English education. The role of syllabus design on the development of teaching philosophy, which contains a set of procedures, principles and methods for teaching a language, will be discussed based on the current literature. I will discuss the teaching context including university goals, learner characteristics and teacher beliefs on learning in order to justify recommendations to the syllabus. Following the description of my teaching context, the university syllabus will be described, analyzed and evaluated in terms of its role on the course, materials, teachers and students. Research, theory, and this author's classroom research support the hypothesis that recommendations for the improvement of the syllabus in terms of changes to the main syllabus and sub syllabus will create better opportunities for learners to acquire language. I will then present a sample syllabus that best suits my teaching context and learner needs. The concluding section will make generalizations on innovated syllabus design implementation regarding the realities of day to day classroom practices.

**Keyphrases:** Type A syllabus, Type B syllabus, communicative language syllabus, project-based syllabus, process-based syllabus, task-based learning and teaching, PPP, synthetic approach, analytical approach.

### 1. Principles of Syllabus Design

The following section will give a definition of syllabus and the subsequent relationship between syllabus and methodology with references to literature. Type A and Type B syllabuses will be discussed and evaluated regarding the correlation between syllabus and teaching methods. I will then discuss the development of the communicative syllabus in relation to teaching English conversation. Last, a detailed review will look at how syllabus reveals approaches to language learning and teaching.

#### What is a Syllabus?

Teachers, at one point in their professional careers, may be involved in some way or another with designing a syllabus, or part of one. But what is a syllabus? Johnson broadly defines syllabus as an organizational program, a plan for teaching (1). Other researchers define syllabus in traditional terms of linguistic content and linguistic performance focusing on outcomes rather than process (2,3). Traditionally, syllabus designers were concerned about selecting a list of linguistic items such as grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary as well as topics and themes and leaving the planning of activities up to a methodologist. Nunan further defines syllabus design as being concerned with the selection, sequencing and justification of the content of the

curriculum (4). In relation to language teaching, Nunan gives two views on the nature of syllabus design (5). He states that the narrow view does not separate between the selection and sequencing of content and the selection and sequencing of learning tasks and activities. Apart from the different definitions of syllabus, one thing is certain; a syllabus is a document of varying length and style, some more formal than others. Brumfit summarizes the definition of syllabus (6).

**Table 1** Brumfit's Definition of Syllabus (6)

1. A syllabus is the specification of the work of a particular department in a school or a collage, organized in subsections defining the work of a particular group or class.
2. It is often linked to time, and will specify a starting point and ultimate goal.
3. It will specify some kind of sequence based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Sequencing intrinsic to a theory of language learning or to the structure of specified material relatable to language acquisition.</li> <li>b. Sequencing constrained by administrative needs, e.g. materials.</li> </ul>
4. It is a document of administrative convenience and will only be partly justified on theoretical grounds and so is negotiable and adjustable.
5. It can only specify what is taught; it cannot organize what is learnt.
6. It is a public document and an expression of accountability.

In the 1980's, communicative language teaching began to focus on the learners communicative needs and the separation of content and methodology has become more blurred (5). The communicative language syllabus such as notional/functional and task-based syllabuses contributed to communicative methodology; *how* language was being taught. Johnson points out that with the recent trend of communicative language approaches syllabus design is shifting from itemized linguistic content to process oriented syllabus 'so that a statement of content is likely to carry with it methodological implications' (1).

**Table 2** Correlation of Syllabus and Methods (2)

Syllabus	Specific Method or Approach
Situational	Oral/Situational
Structural	Audiolingual
Notional/Functional	Communicative Language Teaching
Tasked-based	Task-based Teaching

### Type A Syllabus and Type B Syllabus

White has characterized two approaches to language syllabuses as Type A and Type B based on the classifications put forth by Davies in Table 3 (6). Type A is a product-oriented syllabus, or synthetic approach, which emphasizes the product of language learning and is prone to intervention from an authority. Type A syllabus includes the structural syllabus, situational syllabus, as well as the notional/functional syllabus. By contrast, Type B is a process-oriented syllabus or the analytical approach, which was developed as a result of the sense of failure in product-oriented courses to develop communicative language skills. Some types of syllabuses that fall under this category are procedural syllabus, task-based syllabus, process syllabus and project syllabus. They are non-interventionist with a view of being a learner-centered or a learning-centered syllabus which are psychological and pedagogical, rather than linguistic (6). In a process-oriented syllabus language is to be learnt experientially as opposed to the step-by-step methods of the synthetic approach. Therefore, the focus is not on what the students will have accomplished during the course, but on the specification of learning tasks and activities that the learner will undertake during the course.

**Table 3** Comparison between Type A and Type B Syllabuses (6)

Type A	Type B
Interventionist	Non-interventionist
External to the learner	Internal to the learner
Other directed	Inner directed or self fulfilling
Determined by authority	Negotiated between learners and teachers
Teacher as decision-maker	Learner and teacher as joint decision makers
Content = what the subject is to the expert	Content = what the subject is to the learner
Content = a gift to the learner from the teacher or knower	Content = what the learner brings and wants
Objectives defined in	Objectives described

advance	afterwards
Assessment by achievement or by mastery	Assessment in relationship to learners' criteria of success
Subject emphasis	Process emphasis
Doing things to the learner	Doing things for or with the learner

### Teaching English Conversation: The Communicative Syllabus

In the early 1970's, the Council for Cultural Cooperation brought together a team of linguists to develop a type of syllabus with the objective of improving communicative competency of learners by focusing on the use of language rather than the description of language through traditional concepts of grammar. One of the linguists, D.A. Wilkins developed a syllabus based on the two types of communicative meanings a learner needs to improve communicative competency. He called them Category Type I and Category Type II. Type I included the semantico-grammatical meaning of language which is more commonly referred to as notions such as time, sequence, quantity, location and frequency. He called Type II the categories of communicative functions such as requests, denials, offers and complaints (2). Wilkins' later published a book based on the framework set forth in earlier research titled *Notional Syllabuses*. The work of Wilkins helped to establish the theoretical applications to communicative language teaching which aims are:

to (a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication (p.155 in Ref.2).

### Weak Version and Strong Version of the Communicative Syllabus

Since the development of the notional/functional syllabus, other communicative syllabuses have been designed attempting to make up for any of the weaknesses that had become apparent with such syllabuses. Mainly, notions and functions tend to be presented in formulaic expressions or unanalyzed chunks in which learners acquire expressions as a whole without knowing the component parts. These chunks are often contextualized in a dialogue practice. For some, this is a weaker version of communicative language teaching. Learners are provided opportunities to use English (Howatt cited in Ref.2) that is often contextualized in controlled communicative drills in which no information is actually exchanged. Furthermore, students interact with the purpose of developing a higher level of accuracy with language and not focusing on developing fluency. In the end, the language output is predictable and may not have real world communicative goals. Stronger versions of communicative language teaching claim that language is acquired through communication, whereby students might be interacting with other people, language output is unknown to the teacher, and language is acquired using English for real communicative purposes, in other words, 'using English to learn it'

(Howatts cited in Ref. 2, p.155).

**Syllabus Analysis: Importance to Teaching and Learning**

New approaches to syllabus design such as the procedural/task based, the process syllabus and the project syllabus are concerned with the process of language learning rather than the product of it. The procedural syllabus is organized around tasks rather than linguistic items or grammatical structures. The theory is that learners will use whatever language is necessary to complete the task, and over time language will be unconsciously absorbed (1).

**Table 4** Procedural/Task Based Syllabus Definition Matched to Approach to Learning and Language

Syllabus	Definition By White (6)	Task Definitions by Skehan (7) and Legutke and Thomas (8)	Approaches to Learning and Language by White (6)
Procedural/Task Based Syllabus	Uses tasks and activities to encourage learners to use the language communicatively in order to achieve a purpose	Task definitions vary from weak form to strong form.	Tasks must be relevant to real world language needs of the students.

The process syllabus is learner centered in which the course of the syllabus is negotiated between learners and teachers. It is based on a holistic approach and critics of this syllabus claim it may be too philosophical for practical applications. It has been defined broadly by Breen as 'context within which any syllabus of subject-matter is made workable' (9). The process syllabus has not been fully evaluated and critics also claim that the objectives and aims are difficult to track as the direction of the syllabus is largely the responsibility of the learners (10).

**Table 5** Process Syllabus Definition Matched to Approach to Learning and Language

Syllabus	Definition by White (6)	Approach to Learning and Language by White (6)
Process Syllabus	Learners are involved in the implementation of syllabus design as far as practically possible.	It is assumed that if learners are fully aware of the course they are studying, their motivation and interest will increase.

Project-based syllabus can be seen as the special applications of process and task-based ideas by having strong process dimensions, but are also noted for the product which emerges from the process such as presentations, dramas, and written reports. (8).

**Table 6** Project Syllabus Definition Matched to Approach to Learning and Language

Syllabus	Definition by Legutke and Thomas (8)	Approach to Learning and Language by Haines (11) and Skehan (12)
Project Syllabus	'...theme and task-centered mode of teaching and learning which results from a joint process of negotiation between all participants'. (p. 160)	Product is process continuum which is useful for student feedback, projects give learners some ownership, project outcomes may enhance individual contributions, and the public record of projects seems to encourage focus on form.

The procedural syllabus, process syllabus and project-based syllabus are based on the assumption that communicative teaching methodologies, which include tasks with real world communicative goals, tend to lead to meaningful interaction and information exchanges that provide for a better environment for second language acquisition than a classroom dominated by formal instruction. Yet, there seem to be few empirical studies that are able to evaluate the effectiveness of task performance on communicative learning (2). However, in post class interviews with my students, review of my field notes and previous classroom action research on learner strengths and weaknesses, I believe that communicative methods used within a Type B syllabus framework is best for improving the communicative competency of my students.

2. Teaching Context

In the following section I will discuss university policy and goals, learner characteristics and course description, student beliefs on learning, course objectives and teacher beliefs and qualifications.

**University Policy and English Department Aims**

I interviewed the English department chairman about the goals of the English curriculum and individual course objectives (see Appendix 1 for questions). The objectives for the English department is that students will be able to reach a level of communicative competency that is understandable to fluent speakers in work, in personal communication and presentations at international symposiums. Table 7 shows the development stages and the decision making roles of those involved and the end products.

**Table 7** Stages, Decision Making Roles and Products in Curriculum Development at the University (13)

Developmental stages	Decision-making roles	Products
Curriculum Planning	University president, English department chairman and faculty committee on curriculum.	Curriculum document distributed to all faculty, part-time lecturers and staff.

Specification: Ends Means	Needs analysis: communication for work and conferences and TOEFL test scores.  Methods: English courses include TOEFL classes and English for general communicative purposes and academic writing.	Syllabus with course objectives designed by English Department chairman with little or no input from part-time lectures.
Program Implementation	Course material designed by individual instructors	Teaching materials that are not shared
Classroom Implementation	1. Teachers 2. Learners	Teaching acts. Learner acts

### Learner Characteristics and English Production 301 Course Description

The university English Department has a co-ed student population of about 550 students with an equal mix of male and female students. The students are between the ages of 18 and 22, with most completing the English Production 301 course requirement for graduation during their third year. The Production 301 course is a 90 minute class held once a week for 15 weeks.

Table 8 University Student Profile

<b>Educational Background</b>	Students have studied English for about 8 years: 3 years at Jr. High School and 3 years at High School. This is set by the National Board of Education. All students have taken the Production 101 and Production 201 the prerequisite to Production 301.
<b>Learning Purposes</b>	Gain improved skills in general English communicative abilities and improve TOEFL test scores.
<b>Culture</b>	Mono-cultural: all current students are Japanese.
<b>Motivation</b>	<i>Intrinsic Motivation:</i> Through teacher-student interaction, previous classroom action research on good learners the students seem to be highly motivated to improve communicative skills; generally good learners, attend class and seem interested in English. Furthermore, they are all English Majors. <i>Extrinsic Motivation:</i> English courses are compulsory.
<b>Abilities</b>	Through ethnographic fields notes students have been recorded as being on task, complete assignments and generally perform at the above average level on tests and exams. Language ability: Based on Richards' (13) Proficiency Descriptions students are intermediate-mid to intermediate-high

### Students' Beliefs on Learning

Students seem to understand the necessity of learning English for communicative purposes and for the TOEFL test. Students appear to understand that communicative lessons are necessary to enhance speaking skills that are lacking after six years of study at the secondary level. A scan through a typical university textbook reveals most of the lexis used is in English. Therefore, I assume that students believe that learning English for

academic purposes is necessary. Students are aware that the TOEFL and TOEIC tests may be used for job applications as a pre-screening/filtering mechanism companies use to quickly assess students' language abilities. These are my opinions based on structured and unstructured interviews and prior classroom research on learner beliefs with students from the university.

### Course Objectives

The Production 301 course has two objectives. The primary objective is the improvement of general communicative productive skills. The secondary objective is to improve the TOEFL test scores of students.

### Teacher Beliefs, Experience and Interests

I am the current instructor for the Production 301 course. The syllabus is not strictly enforced and through learner needs analysis combined with teacher training in communicative approaches to language learning I believe the syllabus hinders students' ability to improve communicative skills.

### The Foreign Teacher

The Educational system in Japan puts a heavy burden on entrance exams for high schools and universities. Students are taught English grammar, reading and recently listening to pass entrance exams in mostly teacher fronted classrooms lacking lessons that focus on improving overall communicative competency. Therefore, I believe that my students at the university need to improve communication skills. Each skill can be taught, with some training, in a communicative style. I am a certified teacher with training in communicative language teaching methodologies, ranging from PPP (Present, Practice, Produce) to TBLT (Task-Based Learning and Teaching) including more innovated methods such as ARC (Authentic, Restricted, Clarified). Essentially, the communicative methods I employ in my classes based on my teacher training and professional development goes against the theoretical underpinnings that support the current syllabus, which is based on Type A syllabus design.

Table 9 Teacher Qualifications and Professional Development

Certificate	Type
Cambridge CELTA (Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults)	Entry Level Teaching Certificate focusing on communicative teaching methods. Trained in PPP (Present, Practice, Produce) framework.
School for International Training TEFL/TESL Certificate	Entry Level Teaching Certificate focusing on experiential learning cycle and reflective teaching principles.
School for International Training Mentor Teacher Trainer Certificate	Advanced Level Teaching Certificate focusing on supervision and observation as a teacher trainer.
Master of Arts in TEFL/TESL	Advanced Level: Exploring the theoretical underpinnings of second language acquisition.

3. Analysis of the university English Conversation Production 301 Syllabus

The syllabus used at the university for the Production 301 course is copied from the table of contents including only the unit titles and grammar column topics of *American Headway 2* by John and Liz Soars (14).

Table 10 Current University Syllabus

English Production 301	
Student Year	Third Year
Units	1.5 Unit (15x 90 min. Lessons)
Instructor	
Contents	This is a course which will use the four skills to improve students' communicative skills. Students will work in pairs and groups with low participation from the instructor.
Materials	Text is not required.
Methods	Students will practice linguistic forms and use them in communicative activities.
Prerequisite	Production 101 and Production 201
Grading	Students will be assessed on their ability to complete the activities and tasks. A mid-term, final and attendance will also be figured.
Class Schedule	
1. Getting to know you	9. Going places-, travel
2. The way we live	10. Scared to death
3. It all went wrong- Past continuous	11. Passives, past participles
4. Shopping- Quantifiers and Articles	12. Dreams
5. Future intentions-Will and be going to...	13. Jobs and working
6. Comparing-er, more, est, most	14. Human Relations-Love and friendship
7. Famous people, places and things	15. Final Evaluation
8. Test	

Despite copying the syllabus, the textbook itself is not used in class and teachers are encouraged to produce original materials focusing on the topics, themes and linguistic items for each lesson. In one respect this is an advantage to the teacher as there are no barriers, limitations or institutional demands placed on the methodology employed by the teacher which may go against teaching beliefs. This is a problem as Sinclair and Renouf (15) argue a coursebook is not a syllabus rather it 'is essentially a set of instructions concerning operations in the classroom'. In a harsher criticism, Sinclair and Renouf argue:

a syllabus which is dependent on a particular

coursebook is a degenerate syllabus, not very much different from the table of contents. It might even have been composed after the materials rather than before (cited in Ref. 15, p. 146).

Production 301 Syllabus: Main, Sub-Syllabuses

The syllabus is mixed with elements of topical, structural, and functional items (See Table 10, sample copy of the syllabus). The main syllabus is topical /structural which consists of a list of grammatical items arranged according to the order in which they are to be taught (16). The structures seem to be ordered according to an intrinsic difficulty (13) beginning with items believed to be acquired easier (present tense) to more difficult items (present perfect continuous). Each lesson is titled based on a topic or function/notion. In some cases the distinction between topic and function/notion is clear, for example, unit 12's topic is Dreams. Yet, in other units it is more difficult to distinguish between the two sub-syllabuses and seems what is to be taught is left to the discretion of the teacher. Unit 4 reveals that the lesson can either be functional/notional; at a store or requesting for shopping or topical as the teacher can select shopping as a general topic for discussion.

The Approach Underlying Production 301 Syllabus: PPP

The Lesson Methods section of the syllabus seems to reveal a presentation, practice and produce approach to teaching. In a PPP approach the target language is presented in the first stage of the lesson. That is followed by a practice phase in which the target language item used is drilled by the teacher. Last, students produce less controlled utterances but still incorporating the target language item. However, the activity is designed so that students would hopefully produce the target language without intervention from the teacher (7). Skehan states three arguments favoring its use as an approach to teaching:

- The teacher is in charge of proceedings, has control over what is to be learnt and exactly how that will be taught.
- Clear lesson goals which can be easily evaluated (whether or not the target language is produced in the last phase).
- Clear connection with underlying theory that learning is focused on rules which are 'automatized as a set of habits'.

Role of the Syllabus on the Teacher, Students and Materials

The syllabus essentially determines the choice of content and how that is organized into an instructional system to meet course objectives and aims (2). Hopefully, the syllabus is based on an approach that matches the teacher's methods, learner beliefs and

materials. When there is a mismatch between the underlying approaches in the syllabus to teaching methods or materials the objectives may not be satisfied and the class fails. A mismatched syllabus to teacher beliefs can also lead to teacher frustration and then complete abandonment of the syllabus, especially if the syllabus is not strictly enforced.

### Role of the Syllabus on the Teacher

The course content of the university syllabus and lesson methods sections influence the role of the teacher in four ways based on Richards and Rodgers (2) definition of teacher roles in methods. The range in which the syllabus influences teaching methods and the control teachers have over that methodology in relation to objectives of the syllabus vary. 'Some methods are totally dependent on the teacher as a source of knowledge' (Ref. 2: 28) while some are more restricting attempting to limit 'teacher initiative by building instructional content and direction into texts or lesson plans' (Ref. 2: 28). Nunan refers to this as the control continuum with a decentralized curricula and fully centralized curricula at opposite ends (17). The Production 301 syllabus seems to fall somewhere between a tight/prescriptive syllabus and a loose/descriptive one.

**Table 11** Teacher Roles in Methods Related to the Syllabus and the Implications

Teacher Roles in Methods (Ref. 2: 28)	English Production 301 Syllabus	Suggested Implications
Role of Teacher as director, counselor or model.	Low teacher Talk time.	May suggest teacher as counselor or facilitator of knowledge.
Degree of control teacher has over how learning takes place.	Pair and small group work. Variety of activities using a presentation, practice and produce or use phase.	Communicative Language approach based on a PPP methodology.
Degree to which teacher is responsible for determining course content.	Lessons aims are planned in advanced.	Lessons aims not determined by teacher limiting teacher initiative may lead to teacher frustration. Learner needs not taken into consideration seems to imply the syllabus is more concerned with the product not the process of learning.
Interactional patterns developed between learner and teacher.	Mixed: Low teacher talk time yet more traditional role of teacher in PPP framework.	Seems to suggest low teacher talk time as teacher as a facilitator. However, it is a structural syllabus therefore the role of the teacher still may be regarded as interventionist and

		traditional. This may imply a strict separation of teacher roles and student roles along traditional lines.
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### Role of the Syllabus on Learners

The syllabus' role on learners seems to correspond to one of Johnson and Paulston (18) learner roles stated in Richards and Rodgers (Ref. 2: 28) that learners are members of a group and learn by interacting with others'. The Production 301 syllabus states 'Students will work in pairs and groups on activities with low teacher talk time' (refer to Table 10) which suggests teachers use procedures that create situations in which students are paired or grouped to facilitate student-student interaction. However the syllabus does not allow for learners to 'plan their own learning program' (2) and then be responsible for the processes of that learning. It is not a process-oriented syllabus.

### Role of the Syllabus on the Materials

The role of the Production 301 syllabus on materials is dependant on the teacher. In a memo circulated to teachers, the department chairman instructed teaching staff to develop materials and not rely on copies of *American Headways 2*. Therefore, the type of material used is determined by the teacher with the main objective covering the four skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. The amount of time teaching each skill nor the intensity of coverage is determined in the syllabus. I developed original lessons used to cover the 15 lessons, which attempted to meet the learning objectives that are planned in advance. The memo and department chairman's instructions gave me the freedom and flexibility when planning each lesson regarding the selection of materials. In other words, the objectives of the course are planned before the material is developed, which suggests that the teacher can employ lessons using procedures and activities that are in line with the teacher beliefs.

## 4. Evaluation of the Syllabus

In the following section I will evaluate the syllabus in relation to course objectives, the syllabus approach related to teacher and learner characteristics and the syllabus approach relating to principles of foreign language teaching.

### The Syllabus and Course Objectives

The syllabus is a multi skills Type A syllabus blending a structural syllabus with aspects of the functional/notional type. The language items are graded from language that is assumed to be acquired easily first then progressing to more difficult structures. Critical of the natural order acquisition of grammatical items Richards argues (19):

Although the validity of this acquisition sequence has been questioned, the idea that grammatical

structures are acquired in a natural order and that this order should inform teaching has been proposed by a number of applied linguistics. However, little reliable information on acquisition sequences has been produced that could be of practical benefit in planning a grammar syllabus.

Therefore, a syllabus that is sequenced according to grammatical structures does not seem to support the course objectives of the syllabus, which is to improve the student's communicative abilities.

#### **Weaknesses of the Syllabus Related to Teacher and Learners**

The approach to learning which seems to be stated in the syllabus as a present, practice and produce framework is not the best for my students. Although trained in that system, after continued professional development and implementation of other methods I feel that the PPP approach does not work best for my students. I do not believe that a precise focus on form and accuracy leads to learning and 'automatization (that learners will learn what is taught in the order in which it was taught)' (7). I remember teaching a past tense lesson on irregulars and the students were in the practice phase of the PPP cycle using the correct forms. However, about ten minutes later in the produce phase the activity was designed to illicit past tense irregular verbs. The produce phase activity was successful and the students were using the past tense in a freer communicative manner. During the task, I observed most students did not produce the correct form, which they had just finished practicing ten minutes before. Based on this experience and similar ones, I believe a PPP method does not carry much weight compared to other communicative methods that are more aware of the learner's contributions to language acquisition, such as task-based teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the syllabus does not take into account learner needs analysis; the syllabus dictates what is being taught and exactly when that is being taught. The learners have no input on the topics and situations that they are interested in talking about. Through student needs analysis surveys, acquiring information on students' interests can be done quickly and effectively. The results can help the teacher when deciding on topics and situations, and be effective in developing a method that best matches students' preferred learning styles and beliefs. Firstly, during unstructured interviews and after conducting a needs analysis survey (see Appendix 2) it seems that students are not interested in the topics or situations listed on the syllabus: shopping, fame, frightening things, dreams, or jobs. In my survey, I found that students most wanted to talk about travel, music, club activities, family, friends, movies, current events and sports. Slimani cited in Nunan in a study conducted on Algerian learners found that 'learners benefited much more from their peers' rare instances of topicalisation than from the teacher's...' (5). Secondly, through ethnographic field notes, I observed that

students had already learned the grammatical points included in the syllabus and were using those linguistic items correctly.

#### **Syllabus and Principles of Foreign Language Teaching**

My theories on foreign language teaching correspond to some aspects of the syllabus and contrast on others. The contrasts seem to outweigh the principles that match the theoretical underpinnings of the syllabus. I believe my students have acquired enough language skills through six years of controlled practice and grammar studying for entrance exams and need to focus on developing fluency and the ability to solve communication problems utilizing tasks with real world language goals. The current syllabus does not provide enough incentives or opportunities to use the language they already have in a communicative way. My students need to develop their ability to solve problems that are beyond the prefabricated chunks that are often target language aims achieved through controlled and less controlled communicative activities inherent to typical PPP lessons (7).

#### **5. Suggested Recommendations to the Syllabus**

I suggest changes be made to the syllabus to meet the course objectives of improving the general communicative level and higher TOEFL and TOEIC scores, while attempting to find a balance between my beliefs on teaching and learning and the University and English Department policies. I believe a mixed syllabus combining a main project syllabus with a task-based sub-syllabus would benefit my students best.

#### **Recommended Change to the Main Syllabus and Sub-Syllabus**

I recommend a radical change to the syllabus shifting from a Type A synthetic one to a Type B analytical one essentially abandoning the current syllabus. I will relate the recommendations based on my beliefs on teaching and learning and my background.

- *I suggest a **Project-based syllabus** as the main syllabus.*
- *I suggest a **task-based language teaching syllabus** as the sub-syllabus*

I use projects structured around tasks as part of teaching procedures and students seem to enjoy the lessons and have improved their fluency and general communicative competencies. Based on observed outcomes of prior and current projects and tasks in class, I suggest that a project syllabus based on task-based language teaching principles with student-teacher negotiation of projects would best fit the my students' needs. Through needs analysis surveys and interviews the projects could be negotiated which in itself is leaning English by using it.

**Justification for the Changes in Approach**

Students of the Production 301 class range from a low-intermediate level to a high-intermediate level and a task-based learning approach is appropriate for these students. They have studied basic grammar and vocabulary and have been observed using those linguistic items correctly in class, but now need opportunities to put this language to use. Furthermore, task-based learning also ‘works well with mixed ability groups since task achievement does not depend on having a specific level of ability; it is rather a case of each according to their means’ (20). Willis outlines the relation of task-based teaching which best fits the needs of my students to the four components of learning based on current SLA theories (21):

- Exposure to comprehensible input of real language.
- Opportunities for *real language use*
- Goals of the task are *motivating* to students
- Focus on language form during consciousness-raising activities within the task cycle and sharing of information by making information public in presentations

Practically speaking, I have recently developed a set of projects and task-based lesson plans that follow the above listed components set forth in Willis (21), and it makes for good sense to use them in my teaching context with students at the university.

With a project based syllabus, my students would progressively take more responsibility for their learning. Fried-Booth suggests sequencing the project work so that the teacher decides on introductory topics, but once the introductory stages are over the students are ready to take a more direct role in the choice of topics and how the project is executed (22). Based on the Fried-Booth three stages of projects matched with project structures outlined by Legutke & and Thomas (8) I believe my students would benefit from a project syllabus combined with task-based language teaching approach.

**Table 12** Project Stages Matched to Project Structures

Fried-Booth (22) Project Stages	Legutke and Thomas (8) Project Structures
1. Classroom Based  ● Provision of stimulus material ● Definition of project objectives ● Analysis and practice of language skills ● Design of written materials	1. Opening  2. Topic Orientation
2. Carrying out of projects.  ● Group activities ● Collation of materials	3. Research and data collection  4. Preparing data presentation
3. Review/Monitoring  ● Organization of material ● Final presentation	5. Presentation  6. Evaluation

6. Improving the Syllabus

Based on my teaching beliefs, learner abilities and role of syllabus on materials, I believe the following points of improvement to the syllabus will improve general English competencies and perhaps raise TOEFL scores in way that is more interesting, motivating, student centered, and communicative than the current syllabus.

**Table 13** Points of Improvement

1. Shift from a Type A, synthetic one to a Type B, analytical one giving students more responsibility in the learning process. The proposed syllabus is based on teacher experience including background and beliefs, learner abilities and beliefs, and theoretical research on project and task-based syllabuses. <i>It is not a copied table of contents.</i>
2. Project Syllabus with Task Based Language Learning approach in order to give students opportunities for real communication.
3. Flexible and apt to change according to learner needs.
4. A more descriptive Methods sections.
5. Course requirements and grading made clearer for students by attaching percentages to each aspect of course grades.
6. Class Calendar is flexible and learner centered. Dates for finals, portfolios and schedule of projects easy to follow.
7. Includes suggestions for teacher feedback from students.
8. Portfolios give students chance for reflective assessment of learning.

**The Improved Version of the University Syllabus**

Based on Breen’s paradigm shift in language teaching (9), the new syllabus provides for procedures for communicating, learning and classroom work. Furthermore, it integrates communicative knowledge systems and use of language skills to complete projects. Last, it establishes plan as basis for learning work (Tasks) and a framework for classroom planning (Process).

**Table 14** Proposed University Syllabus

English Production 301	
Student Year	Third Year
Units	1.5 Unit (15 90 min. Lesson)
Instructor	
Contents	A number of Projects decided by the teacher along with student suggestions will be the center of classroom activities and tasks. In past classes projects have included making a newspaper movie section, writing a manual for living in Japan, and video news cast based on current events. The syllabus is flexible and apt to change according to learner needs. Students will have opportunities for teaching/learning feedback and suggestions.
Materials	Course Material will be decided based on Projects and Tasks. It is highly recommended students have access to computer/internet for research and data collection
Methods	Teacher will use tasks and activities developed around projects selected by students. The first and second projects will be selected by the teacher until students become more aware of project procedures. Once topics are selected, students will complete tasks and activities related to projects to give students opportunities to analyze language and develop skills necessary

	for final presentations. Students will research and collect data for projects, organize materials and share finished projects with other students/groups/whole class. Students will keep a learning portfolio. Students will have to spend time outside class time doing research for projects or data collection if necessary.
Prerequisite	Production 101 and Production 201
Grading	Students will be graded on project presentations (30%), level of participation during activities (25%), Final Exam (20%), Portfolio (15%) and an Individual Conference (10%) Student self evaluation and project evaluation will be done throughout the course. Attendance will follow university policy.
Proposed Class Schedule	
1. Group Norms: Working With Others Good Learner Task Group Norms/ Project Ideas • Portfolio: Explanation and samples • Materials: <i>Teacher Bio Handout</i>	Project 5a: Selected by Students
2. Project 1: Group Work Self Assessment- NASA MARS Task • Materials: <i>Discussion Principles, Internet NASA handout</i>	Project 5b: Continued from 5a
Project 2a: The Teaching Game • Opening: The Magic Trick! • Project Objectives You're The Teacher Task: Say what you want and mean what you say task Materials: <i>SIT Handout</i>	Project 6a and Final Oral Exam Project Explanation. Materials: <i>Final Exam Outline Handout</i>
Project 2b Your Teaching Activity Objective Outline and methods task sheet Small Group Presentation Group/ Self Evaluation of Communicative skills after first project. Materials: <i>Evaluation Form</i>	Project 6b
Project 3a: Selected from Day one Survey	Project 7a and 'Final Examination: Procedure' Materials: <i>Handout#2 Outline for Final</i>
Project 3b: continued from 3a.	14. Project 7b
Project 4: The 90 Minute Project!	15. Final Evaluation- Oral Exam, Portfolios Due • Materials: <i>Evaluation Form</i>
Individual Conferences Mid-Term Portfolio Assessment Teacher Feedback/Suggestions Materials: <i>Suggestion Box/Feedback Forms</i>	

7. Conclusion

Views on the changing nature of language has led to a shift in language teaching and learning ideas since the publishing of innovated syllabus design such as Wilkins' development of the functional/notional syllabus, Prabhu's implementation of the procedural syllabus

during the Bangalore Madras Communicational Teaching Project and more recent Breen's research on the process syllabus. In my experience, teaching methods should not be based on set of pre-planned activities based on a teacher trainer course that seems to be the best and most accepted methods of the day. I have attempted to develop my own syllabus design based on the reflective assessment of the principles behind my teaching methods as related to Ozdeniz outlined in Willis J., and Willis D. (23):

- Your ideas about what makes a good teacher and what leads to good language learning.
- What you actually do in the classroom, e.g. when introducing new vocabulary or when carrying out a reading lesson.
- The beliefs and theories behind the materials you use.
- The ideas about successful teaching held by your colleagues, school and education system.

Current SLA research has cast 'considerable doubt on traditional justification for Type A syllabuses' (6). And at the same time, there has also been little effort to evaluate any task-based or process approach in operation and the debate of the effectiveness of process oriented syllabuses will continue (6). Being a teacher and novice syllabus designer I wonder which syllabus? I agree with White's statement that 'in the end, a hybrid syllabus is the result not based on theoretical considerations, but because, in the day to day world of teaching, this will be the compromise which satisfies most interest groups. Assuming the effects of syllabus on methods, Prabhu's cautious advice for the teacher not to fall prey to the notion that there is a method that is best rings a certain truth (24).

Appendix 1: List of questions (13)

The interview was conducted in English with the English Department Chairman. The questions were asked to get a better understanding of university goals and aims in regards to the English language program at the university. I have included a summary of his responses.

1. *What are the main educational purposes that the university is trying to attain with regarding all subjects as well as the English Language Program?*

That each faculty at the university has clear aims for the students written out in text and presented in the syllabus. He was concerned that the students know what exactly they are being taught and some basic outline of the methods employed to reach those aims established by each teacher. He also stressed that the curriculum guidelines be applied to all the courses at the university, not just the English courses.

2. *What kind of educational experiences can be provided that will help students reach the goals of*

*the curriculum as well as individual course?*

Students need to have a well rounded educational experience that includes theory and experience. He stated that students need to use English in a communicative way and a variety of courses are needed, communicative as well as TOEFL courses. He stressed TOEFL scores over communicative needs of students throughout the interview.

3. *How are educational experiences organized at the university as a whole and at the course level?*

Stressed need for graded learning, whereby courses build upon one another. He also stressed internships and work experience as vital to improve English skills. He was not overly concerned about students using English at internships but was concerned about organizing courses for students that would improve overall competencies as well as improved test scores.

4. *How can we determine if these goals are met?*

He answered that students' passing the final exams and graduating as the final test of whether or not the curriculum was successful and the ability of students, mainly graduate students, to use English when presenting papers at conferences. He believed that high scores on standardized tests would open up job opportunities for students especially those moving on into educationally related fields.

## Appendix 2: Student Survey on Topics and Situations

Please answer the following question.

What are some topics that you would like to talk about or discuss?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Please answer the following questions.

1. How do you like to learn English best?
  - a. individually
  - b. in pairs
  - c. in small groups (4-6)
  - d. in larger groups (6+)
2. Do you like to do tasks and activities where you are using English for a project to present to other classmates? (For example, making a travel pamphlet, writing a resume, designing a city guide of foreign visitors to Japan)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. Do you like to practice dialogues and then try to do role play activities?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. I like learning English best by...(circle the best answer)
  - a. Speaking it freely
  - b. Using English in role plays
  - c. Using English during tasks
  - d. Using English in practice dialogues
  - e. Reading English
  - f. Studying grammar
  - h. Writing letters, emails etc...

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